SNOOKER TAM

of the

Cathcart Railway

BY

R.W. CAMPBELL

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SNOOKER TAM

OF THE

CATHCART RAILWAY

BY

R. W. CAMPBELL

Author of
'Private Spud Tamson,' 'Dorothy, V.A.D.,' &c.

LONDON: 38 Soho Square, W.1

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED

EDINBURGH: 339 High Street

1919

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. & R. Chambers, Limited.

First Edition,	May 1919.
Second "	June 1919.
Third "	Sept. 1919.

DEDICATED

TO

THE RAILWAY MANAGERS, OFFICIALS,

AND RAILWAYMEN

WHO SO LOYALLY HELPED TO

WIN THE WAR

R. W. CAMPBELL
AUCHENCAIRN
CASTLE-DOUGLAS

1919

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SNOOKER TAM.

CHAPTER I.

SNOOKER TAM.

GOD made the country, man made the cities, and the railways made the suburbs. Suburbia was created for dividends, and dividends for Suburbia. In all cities—from 'Glesca' to Timbuctoo—there is found that proud section of the populace which refuses to live in a tenement and squabble about the washing-house key. We are all Tories, we are all snobs, even our Bolsheviks. Every man wants a main door and an electric bell. To be King of the Castle is a dream for which all men strive, especially those born north of the Tweed. It is the echo of our land hunger, our independence, and our pride. If we cannot get something in the baronial style, then we get the next best in villadom; hence the growth of Suburbia and the rise of the Cathcart Railway. This railway is as famous as the Grand Trunk Road or Watling Street. To be

ignorant of the Cathcart Circle is akin to saying that the Thames is in Germany, and the Tweed in Alaska! After the 'Polis Force,' the Cathcart Railway is the greatest thing in 'Glesca.'

A wag has alleged that this railway was specially built 'for high heid yins in insurance offices, public-hooses, and drapers' shops.' No matter! It is a most convenient line, and the cheapest thing out of Lipton's. For fourpence you can ride round and round the Circle. Indeed, many a lover has found that it is better to invest fourpence in the Cathcart Circle than two shillings at the picture-house. Humorists call it the honeymoon line. It is a deadly trap for bachelors, and the hope of the pretty typists. All single men, on arriving in 'Glesca,' are advised to look for lodgings round the Circle. No wonder! At 'the five-thirty' can be seen everything from a Geisha to a Madonna. The Venus from Pollokshields rubs shoulders with the Gaby from Cathcart. Low blouses whisper romance, while the eyes have the story of Eve and the sauce of Byron. Calvin would lament the daring, but Prince Charlie would rejoice.

It is the Circle of Romance.

You will readily understand that everybody on the Cathcart Circle is a per-

sonality. The station-masters are experts in handling the crowd. And it's no use producing a leather card-case (empty) and shouting, 'Season.' It can't be done! 'Wee Mac,' the manager, has trained his flying squad to observe the God-fearing elders who 'slip' old concert tickets, and the respectable dons who always leave their money in their Sunday 'breeks,' and promise to pay 'in the mornin'.' There's nothing free on the Circle except an occasional ragman's flea or a suicide in the Mount Florida Tunnel. Only one whisky-bottle has been found by a passenger, which is direct proof of the remarkable observation of the staff. Next to the married men and the typist passengers, the staff is the most interesting gathering outside of Pickard's Wax-works. They can make cows laugh, and stop engines 'wi' a whustle.'

And this brings me to my story of one of the stations on the line. We shall call it Kirkbride. Kirkbride is quite a bonny place. All the houses are cut out like neat pats of butter; a tree in the front, three leeks at the side, and four daisies in the corner, in the style of garden cities. Everybody is thoroughly respectable. The residents willingly subscribe to the teetotal societies and get their Worcester Sauce

from the licensed grocer. To prove their wonderful economy (now glorified by the war), the ladies go to bed while the silk blouse is being ironed. It is an unwritten law that you *never* call during ironing-hours. Everybody reads the *Record* and asks for 'a keek at the *Herald*.' The unfortunates who own a telephone become the unwilling proprietors of an exchange from which the neighbours order 'hauf-a-pun' o' haddies' or 'three neeps an' a carrot.' For all that, it is a jolly place, and one of the scenes of merry-making is the railway station. The station-master's name is Maister John M'Muckle, one of those kind old souls who live manfully on a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and so help to pay for the directors' oysters, Gold Flake, and Rolls-Fords. A decent man Maister M'Muckle, with a nod for every under-dog, and his bonnet off to every lady with the latest Treron fashions. Since 1914 Maister M'Muckle has not had a full-grown man on his staff. He has worked away, as he says himself, 'wi' bits o' lassies an' deevils o' boys. Oh man, it's an' awfu' war, is't no?'

One of the boys sent out by Maister M'Harrie, 'the super. o' the line,' was named Snooker Tam, on account of his nose, which was rather pointed. Snooker

hailed from the Cowcaddens, where wife-beating is an industry and cadging is an art. But Snooker was a cut above the 'close-mooth' folks. He had always wanted to be a station-master and 'blaw a whustle.' As his father was alleged to be a 'polisman,' the 'whustle' instinct can be understood. The war gave Snooker his chance. Kirkbride provided him with a platform for his originality. The first thing he did on arriving at the station was to slip three round plumbers' washers into the automatic machine and get three packets of chocolates. No flies on Snooker Tam!

'Here, laddie,' said Maister M'Muckle; 'get the paste-pot an' shove up these bills aboot the Fair Holiday trains.'

'Ach! I 'm no a bill-poster. I cam' oot here to be a high heid yin on the line.'

'What d' ye mean, ye rascal?'

'I jined the railway to wave a flag an' blaw ma whustle.'

'Get haud o' that paste-pot, or I 'll mak' ye blaw the bluid oot yer nose.'

Snooker picked up the paste-pot and the bills, winking to Maggie M'Cheery, the ticket-girl, as he went out. Now, if you know anything about bills, you will realise that bill-posting is an art. These bills are generally printed in sections, either in halves or quarters. Great care has to

be taken to keep the sections in order. Tam knew nothing about this. He was 'jist gaun to stick up bills.' This was the startling result:

GLAS	CAT
FAI	&
HOLI	DOG
ALTER	SHOW
IN	AT
TRAI	BARLINNIE

It was unfortunate for the spotless reputation of Maister M'Muckle that the station filled up at this cruel hour with all the morning passengers, including Bailie M'Onie (a railway director) and Wullie M'Footle, a bit of a wag, who was always clad in a short jacket and a pimple-sized bowler on his towsy head.

'Ha! ha! ha! Come here, boys, an' see the new bill-poster,' shouted Wullie to the gathering crowd of business men.

'That bates a',' remarked the bailie.

'Awa' an' bile yer heid!' ejaculated Snooker, picking up his bucket. At that moment Maister M'Muckle came out to meet the incoming train. His eye caught

the bill, and it sent him purple. However, he passed by and saw the train out.

'Come here, ye rascal. What's this?' demanded the station-master.

'The bills,' muttered Tam.

'Bills! ye red-nebbit heathen! Affrontin' me afore yin o' the railway directors. Tak' it doon this meenit, or I'll gie ye the sack.'

'I didna ken,' mumbled Snooker, very much alarmed. He got off the bill in rapid time, and under the expert tuition of the station-master, who is the best bill-poster on the line, the glaring absurdity was righted.

'Oh man, you're an' awfu' boy!' concluded Maister M'Muckle, with a twinkle in his eye, for, like all station-masters with small salaries, he had a sense of humour. 'Noo, get the brush an' clean oot the waitin'-rooms.'

Snooker grabbed the broom, and started to clean up the remnants of Woodbines, smoked by all the gentlemen of Kirkbride, who store them in silver-mounted cases, *monograms and all.*

Snooker stuck a fag-end in his jaw, and was sweeping away when Mrs Tummy Tumattoo, a well-known resident, arrived. This lady spoke English with the Kelvinside accent, which is *most* refined.

'Here, boy, get my luggage into the train. There's three boxes, four portmanteaus, the parrot's cage, and a small bag *doon* in the corner of the platform.' The word 'doon' was an unfortunate slip, and convinced Snooker that she was one of those 'who pit it on a bit.'

'Are ye shiftin' yer ludgin's?' asked the boy.

'Don't be impertinent. I'm going to the coast. Put the things in the train.'

'Third class?' mumbled Snooker, going off for the barrow. It was a titanic struggle heaving up her bags and boxes. Snooker declared that the lady was shifting her coal-cellar in case she lost the coals while on her holidays. However, he managed the luggage, and having given the bad-tempered parrot a 'smack wi' his bunnit,' he looked into the carriage with the remark, 'It's a' in the van, missis.'

'Thank you. Here you are.' She handed him a penny.

'Keep it, missis, an' buy sugarally-water at Rothesay,' he said, tossing the penny through the window and banging the door.

As the train moved out, Mrs Tummy Tumattoo opened her mouth with rage, and let fall a brand-new set of ivories.

An obliging gentleman collected the débris. A dear pennyworth!

When Snooker slid on to his seat in the booking-office he remarked to bonny Maggie M'Cheery, 'Here, that auld wife offered me a penny.'

'Ach! that's naethin' on the Circle,' remarked Maggie.

'Hoo's that?'

'Yin o' thae toffs gied me a cough-drop for shiftin' hauf-a-ton o' bags an' boxes. War economy,' concluded Maggie, rubbing her nose with the back of her hand, and carrying on with the book-keeping.

During the day Tam had to perform many duties, from hosing down the lavatories to wheeling the barrow, from which he delivered egg-boxes, portmanteaus, and the half-pounds of ham, &c., ordered by the ladies 'to be sent out.' Nobody carries parcels in Kirkbride. To do so is a social sin, worse than 'eatin' black puddin's' with a dago, or sipping 'Johnnie Walker' with a Zulu. The unwritten laws of Suburbia are stricter than those of Mayfair.

Snooker enjoyed this experience, for Kirkbride has the jolliest 'slaveys' in 'Glesca.' They are frequently recruited from the Hielanman's Corner, which is at the end of Jamaica Brig. On any

Thursday night between seven and ten you can see Flora, Jessie, or Jeannie 'chewin' the tartan' with 'polismen' and 'sodgers' (Hielanmen never work), and doing a 'hooch' when a recruiting-piper plays 'The Deil's in the Kitchen.' A lot of these 'deils' get into the Kirkbride kitchens, and many a grocer, flesher, or fruiterer's assistant has had to take unto himself a wife after calling for 'the orders.' To this cheerful system Tam had a pleasant introduction at the back-door of Mrs M'Footle's brand-new mansion. The maid of all work, Flora M'Tavish, opened the door.

'Is this your hauf-pun' o' ham?'

'It is. She'll be a new boy on the job,' said Flora, using the feminine for the masculine, according to the Highlands.

'I'm no a she,' ejaculated Tam, putting his nose round the door.

'Whateffer will she be, then?'

'A he.'

'I thought she was a ferret, with a nose like that.'

'Ach! gie me a jeely piece, an' nane o' yer back chat,' demanded Snooker, sitting down on the jaw-box. Flora supplied him with all he desired, for it is an unwritten law that the 'slaveys' should feed 'the callers.' Lumps of bread and piles

of 'jeely' slipped over his throat with ease. When finished he commenced to admire Flora with almost a professional eye. She was a buxom lass, and quite bonny despite the soot on her nose.

'Gie me a kiss,' he said.

'Go away, boy.'

'Come on, noo, Flora, or I'll no come back.'

'If she will kiss, she'll kiss;' and Flora put out her lips.

Just as Tam was sealing the bargain the door opened, and in stalked Mrs M'Footle, a powerful-looking lady, fifteen stone, three feet broad, and a foot across the eyes.

'Get out, you young rascal!—For shame, Flora!'

Snooker fled to his barrow; and Flora, with that nerve characteristic of her sex, demanded to know 'why she couldn't kiss her boy cousin from Skye.'

'Kiss him ootside, then—no here,' shouted Mrs M'Footle, who always relapsed into her native doric when angry.

Meantime Snooker went on his rounds, wasting half-an-hour at each call. During this period Maister M'Muckle was awaiting his return, as his dinner-hour was 1 P.M. (sharp), and 'that deevil o' a boy hadna turned up to relieve him!' Maister

M'Muckle was angry—real angry—a somewhat rare thing till the war started, and laddies became *men* on the railway. At last he turned up, his face covered with jam, and cookies bulging out of his trousers-pockets.

'Where hae ye been, laddie?' shouted the maister.

'Wi' the barry.'

'D—— ye, does it tak' ye a' day to deliver twa bags an' three parcels?'

'I didna ken the doors.'

'Na; but ye ken the jeely pieces. You've got a face like a jam-works, an' jeely hingin' frae yer nose.'

'Can we no speak to oor customers?'

'Ay, speak quick an' get off.'

'I thocht we had to be ceevil to get trade for the Circle.'

'What made ye think that?'

'Ma uncle's an insurance agent. He tak's tea at a' the hooses, an' kisses the weemin for orders. He's in the Proodenshul.'

'This is a railway, no the Proodenshul,' concluded Maister M'Muckle, going out for dinner. As the door closed, Snooker winked at Maggie and said, 'He's no a bad auld chap. Wud ye like a cookie?'

'Ay.'

They munched cookies till the maister returned. *Between bites they kissed!*

CHAPTER II.

SUBURBAN RIVALRY.

JEALOUSY has been part and parcel of human nature since the year one. It all started through Adam ordering a pair of fig-leaf trousers from the ancestors of Wattie Wulson, who kept the 'Coaliseeum' in the Garden of Eden. Eve promptly replied by demanding a banana skirt on the instalment plan from Antonius Andersonio, who kept a bazaar labelled 'The Poly.' From that day there has been trouble all over the world. Each household, village, town, and city competes with its neighbour in breeks, bustles, and bowlers; hence the growth of our huge drapery establishments, where you can buy anything from red flannelette nighties to margarine muslin blouses at elevenpence three-farthings per yard. (Don't forget the three-farthings.)

This rivalry has spread to the realms of house-building, gardens, clubs—indeed, every phase of our social life. You can see it everywhere from Kelvinside to Woolamooloo. The Cathcart Circle was, therefore, only human when torn with the

all-absorbing question of 'Which is the Nuttiest—Kirkbride or Maxwell Park?' (pronounced 'Mexwell Park'). The more elderly men, tired with bringing up weans and skelping them, took but an onlooking part, but the youths and the maidens were as keen as 'Colman's' in this matter. The author dare not take any side. He can only reprint well-considered opinions. According to Wullie Wullocks and Argay Maclennan, two of the high priests in the gossip and grumbles business, Maxwell Park usually led, owing to the greater wealth achieved in 'Best Scotch' and War Bonds. This opinion is hotly contested in the drawing-rooms, tennis-clubs, and 'fitba'' organisations of Kirkbride. 'We are *we*, an' to Hong-kong wi' Mexwell Park!' This sums up the opposing view.

Now, this rivalry was easily noted by all observant passengers on 'The Circle.' If the flappers of Maxwell Park got into the train in the morning with fresh-air stockings, perforated blouses, and eau-de Cologne hankies, the Kirkbride flappers eclipsed this display the following day; and so it went on. But the boys—'the deevils o' boys,' as Maister M'Muckle called them—printed their views on the carriage walls. Indeed, it was not safe for a member of the Plymouth Brethren to raise his eyes higher

than the newspaper, lest he should see a message written by a sinful hand. Many of these messages would not pass the Press Bureau. Still, to obtain a glimpse of the controversy, here are samples of the scribbled odes:

CHANGE HERE FOR MEXWELL PARK,
MARGARINE, HARD COOKIES,
AND
INDIA RUBBER DICKIES.

The reply of a Maxwell Park boy written underneath:

WHA GET THEIR FAITHER'S AULD
WHITE SHIRTS CUT UP INTO
HANKIES?

KIRKBRIDE.

These things were not true, of course, for it is well known that the 'Maypole' does a fine trade in best Danish. As for the hard cookies and the rubber dickies, these allegations must be left to the Solomons of the Court of Session. With regard to the origin of the Kirkbride hankies, this is an old Scots custom, and no man dare point the finger of scorn at such an economy in war-time. It has received the benediction of Bonar Law.

You will readily understand that this rivalry affected the railway staff. Kirkbride was out to beat Maxwell Park, and *vice versâ*. Maister M'Muckle quickly interested himself in the controversy. When he got wind of the fact that the stationmaster at Maxwell Park was planting some newfangled geranium, he promptly planted 'Sweet-william,' 'Tom Thumb,' and other scented varieties. Maister M'Muckle was a great man for 'scent.' But it was the station staff who really kept the war going. Snooker Tam early figured in the fray. When passing Maxwell Park one morning in the train he called out, 'Hi! hi!' to his rival, Jock Doo.

'What?' shouted Jock.

'That 's yer breakfast,' said Tam, hitting him in the face with half-a-pound of soft black-soap.

'Yu!!!—Yu!!!—!! You!!!—!!!! Yu!' roared Jock; but the train went on, Tam leaning back on the seat with gusto, and occasionally blowing the fumes of a Woodbine in the style of a gilded D.S.O. But Jock Doo had his revenge. Jock could work the telegraph instrument, and that afternoon, when Snooker was away for dinner, the Kirkbride instrument went tick-tick-tick-a-tick-tick-tick. Maggie an-

swered with a tick-tick, and the message came over the wires:

'Dere Maggie,—Your Tam is waukin' oot the wee lassie in the bookstall at Crosshill.

'He's a big baa lamb,
As soft as jeely-jam.
I'll nock him intae ham,
Wi' a dam! dam! dam!'

This was alarming news to Maggie, for she and Tam were already sweethearts; indeed, Tam had presented her with one of those silver rings discovered in six-penny lucky-bags. Maggie, being naturally jealous, at once asked Jock Doo for his evidence. The instrument ticked back:

'I seen him eatin' joojoobs wi' her at the close-mooth last nicht.'

The sweet, trusting Maggie was roused to anger; in fact, she got so flustered that she gave a Gorbals Jew a first-class ticket instead of a third. He took it and smiled, for he was *the* first man who had ever diddled the Cathcart Railway. Tam entered shortly afterwards.

'Jings! it's cauld,' he said, sitting down at the fire.

'I'm no' speakin' to ye,' Maggie said, getting on with her books.

'Hoo 's that?'

'Jist!'

'Ye 're awfu' huffy.'

'Ay!' was the grim response.

'Whit wey?'

'I 'm no speakin' to ye, I tell ye.'

'Dinna speak, then!'

'I 'll speak if I like.'

'But whit are ye speakin' aboot?'

'You!'

'Me?'

'Ay.'

'Ach! ye 're daft.'

'I 'm *no* daft,' she said, turning round on her stool and facing him.

'Ye said ye werena speakin', an' noo ye 're speakin'; but I dinna ken what ye 're speakin' aboot.'

'I ken, though!' she exclaimed, with fire in her eye.

'Ach! hae a joojoob,' he said, handing out a poke.

'Keep yer joojoobs!'

'Ach, awa'! ye 've got the Spanish flu.'

'You 'll get the flu if ye eat joojoobs at the close-mooth wi' lassies.'

'Whit lassies?' exclaimed Tam, aflame with righteous wrath, or seemingly so.

'Ye ken fine.'

'I 've only wan lass.'

'It 's no me, then.'

'Wha is it, then?'

'The Crosshill yin.'

'Crosshill?'

'Ay!'

'Oh?'

'Ay, oh!'

'Whit are ye "ay ohin" aboot?'

'Her!'

'Her?'

'Ay, her!'

'Whit her d' ye mean?'

'The book-stall yin.'

'Book-stall?' he said, scratching his head.

'She was eatin' yer joojoobs last nicht.'

'Last nicht?'

'Ay, last nicht.'

'No wi' me.'

'Wi' you!'

'Did ye see me?'

'Na.'

'Wha telt ye?'

'Never mind!'

'Weel, ye're wrang, Maggie, for I wis at the Waxworks last nicht seein' the hairy man frae Woolamooloo. Somebody's been drawin' yer leg. They're jealous. I can prove it.'

'Oh!' she said, looking up.

'Ay, *oh!*' great emphasis on his 'oh.'

'Prove it, then.'

'Crosshill Station has been shut up for nearly twa years, so there's *nae* book-stall and *nae* lassie there,' he shouted triumphantly.

'Jings! Ye're richt enough,' declared Maggie. 'I'm sorry, Tam. I'll no believe him again. Let's mak' it up.'

'Na!'

'Ach, come on, an' I'll gie ye a kiss.'

'Na.'

'Ach, dae,' she pleaded, with a tear in her eye.

'Tell me wha telt ye, then.'

'I canna dae that.'

'A' richt; I'm feenished wi' ye. I'll get anither lass.'

'It wis Jock Doo.'

'Jock Doo?'

'Ay!'

'When?'

'The day.'

'Did ye see him?'

'Na. He sent it ower the wire.'

Tam then related the incident of the morning, much to Maggie's glee.

'Come on, Tam; here's yer kiss.'

Just as they were sealing the contract, Maister M'Muckle entered the office.

'Here, stop!' he shouted.

'I wis jist takin' a spark oot o' Maggie's e'e,' mumbled Snooker.

'A spark!' exclaimed Maister M'Muckle.

'Ay!'

'Ye're gettin' ower auld in the horn at the sparkin' business. Hoo auld are ye, man?'

'Seventeen.'

'It's time ye were awa' to Constantinople.'

CHAPTER III

MAISTER JOHN M'MUCKLE.

MAISTER M'MUCKLE was of the old school. Duty was duty. The railway came first, his own interests next. The station was his life, his hobby, and an enthralling job. An observant eye peered into every corner. Not one bill was off the straight; 'an' no a crease,' as the experts say. A discarded fag-end or a speck of dust always roused his wrath. And when the boards were needing a 'dab o' paint' he slapped it on, even though he paid for it. He was a great man for shrubs and flowers—a lover of the beautiful. With scythe, mower, rake, spade, and dibble, he worked away at the beautifying of his own domain. Like the artist who hangs caressingly over his masterpiece, Maister M'Muckle's eyes looked lovingly on the green trees, swaying bushes, and nodding flowers. He was an old man, and yet he was young. The bright blue eyes toned down his venerable gray hair and moustache. His youth was drawn from his abiding love of all mankind. Even the lawyers loved him.

If Maister M'Muckle alluded to his staff

as 'bits o' lassies and deevils o' boys,' it was just his way. He loved them, and they loved him. The maister had no need to damn and roar to get things done. He had only to say quietly, 'Here, Maggie, or Tam; dae this,' and it was done, willingly and joyously. If they 'took their fun off him,' he had his fun out of them, for he was a humorist. Beneath his fun there was always the moral 'getting on' and achieving sound success. In short, Kirkbride Station was another 'Cottar's Saturday Night'—the father and sage presiding over his family of lassies and boys. It was good to keek into the booking-office between trains and see him smoking his cutty at the fire, Snooker at the one side, Maggie on the other, and wee Puddin' Broon, the latest apprentice, sitting high up on 'the coonter.' The scene was a sermon on Faith, Hope, and Charity, and in striking contrast with those industrial parts where anger and anarchy are rampant. There was no Bolshevism in this booking-office. The maister was not a Socialist, not even Liberal or Tory. He was a Scottish gentleman of the old world, with an amazing tact when dealing with the varied personalities who purchased his 'seasons,' 'zones,' and ordinary tickets. It

was good to watch him handling the crowd. He always knew his man.

With his wisdom and experience, he was never selfish, for he wanted the lassies and boys to grow up pillars of the State and ornaments of 'The Company.' He imparted his knowledge in his own way.

'Whit's a director?' inquired Snooker one day.

'Oh, a heid yin. Be awfu' ceevil, and mind and open the cairriage door. That's hoo ye get the superintendents' jobs.'

'But hoo are you no a super.?' was the prompt inquiry.

'Because I havena got your impidence.'

'That's done you,' roared Maggie.

'Ach! I'm no impident. I'm jist pushin' on.'

'See ye gang the richt wey, then, laddie. Be a gentleman.'

'Hoo can ye be a gentleman on the railway?'

'Oh man, but ye're thick in the heid. You've been listenin' to thae Socialists up in Pollokshaws. Jist be ceevil to a' folks, and touch your bonnet to the ladies. That's the wey to get on.'

'That's richt, Maister M'Muckle; he disna ken what to dae when he meets a lassie,' remarked Maggie.

'You'll maybe learn him,' was the

maister's shrewd retort, as he blew the smoke up the lum.

'D'ye no get tips for openin' the doors?' asked Puddin' Broon.

'Whiles, man, whiles; but if ye're aye lookin' for tips you'll no get them. Folks are quick at spottin' the bawbee-catchers. Obleege folk, and they'll no forget ye. Wee Mac got the manager's job for his hard work and ceevility to Bailie Benshaw. Ceevility costs naethin' at a', an' hard work's guid for men and lassies. There's Tammy Lipton. I mind fine when he used to sell hauf-pun's o' ham, and saut herrin' at tuppence a dizzen.'

'Ay, Maister M'Muckle, but ye can mak' mair money oot o' Irish ham than ye can on the railway,' remarked Snooker.

'Money, boy, is the root o' a' evil to some folks. Dae ye ken, when I wis a boy like you on the railway I got hauf-a-croon a week. My auld mither patched ma breeks wi' corn-bags, and soled ma buits wi' waxcloth. Ye're gettin' twenty-three shillin's a week. Are ye no weel aff?'

'Ay,' growled Tam.

'Oh ay,' emphasised Maggie, who had a sweet content with her lot.

'Ach! you're jist tryin' to keep in wi' the maister. You lassies hiv nae opeenions.'

'Hiv we no? It's the lassies that are winnin' the war. Look at the thoosands that are makin' shells to kill the Germans.'

'Ay; but they're better at killin' men,' remarked Snooker.

'An' feedin' them,' said the maister.

'An' eatin' the men's sweeties,' piped wee Puddin' from the top of 'the coonter.'

'You an' yer sweeties! You've been here a fortnicht, an' only gien me a wee caramel.'

Puddin' collapsed, and the maister grinned.

'While I mind, boys, I want to tell you hoo to work the different sort o' passengers. Folks are sometimes like the Germans—kind o' queer. Keep them a' happy. On the railway ye get awfu' nice folks, pernickety budies, unceevil yins, and complainers to the heid office. The nice folks'll no bother ye. They tak' their tickets, an' often leave ye a sixpence on the ledge. But watch the pernickety yins.'

'Whit's pernickety?' asked Snooker Tam.

'Thae girnie budies, red noses, greetin' mooths, an' nae meat on their shanks. They didna get their saps when they were weans. Humour them! Humour them! When they bite yer nose off say never a

word, and they'll jump into the train awfu' pleased wi' themselves.'

'Can ye no hit the unceevil yins?' queried Puddin', who was an aggressive youth.

'Man, you're no big enough to knock a flea aff the bed. Na, na, laddies; meet unceevility wi' ceevility. Ceevility's a thing they canna get their nails into. It bates them, and in time they'll come roond to the bookin'-office door at Christmas wi' hauf-a-croon, a fat hen, and a wee bottle. Ceevility's the motto on the Cathcart Circle.'

'Ay, maister; but what are ye to dae wi' the folks that complain to the heid office?' asked Maggie.

'Jist lauch; and some nicht, when ye get them strugglin' wi' a trunk or a bag, gie them a lift, an' they'll never write to the heid office again.'

'Ach! you're ower soft wi' folks, Maister M'Muckle. I wud send them to the hot place,' muttered Tam.

'Oh man! oh man! you'll never be a gentleman. It's you aggressive individuals that mak' a' the bother in this worl'. You've ower muckle o' the Kaiser in ye. D' ye ken, I've been station-maister here for years, an' no a budie has said an unkind word to me. If I took your advice, I

wudna keep ma job ten meenits. Oh man! you're no wise. Listen to me, boys. In *fifty* years' work only ae man wis an enemy, but I cured *him*. It wis when I wis heid porter at Clanslachty. He wis a big, bad-tempered, fermin' budie, bad to his wife, bad to his weans, an' bad to his dugs. He wis aye cursin' us boys at the station. Often an' often he got drunk, an' ca'd me a' the names that are no in the dictionary. Whiles ma auld Scotch bluid wis up to ma mooth, an' I wanted to fell him. But I bore him—bore him for five long years. Ae nicht he got drunk an' fell oot o' the train. When I asked him for his ticket he cursed and swore, and made a hit at me. I jooked, and he fell, cursin', wi' the foam rinnin' oot his mooth like a mad bull. Oh, I was sair perplexed. The jile was the place for him. An' I thocht aboot lockin' him up. Then, boys,' said the old man softly, 'I remembered a sermon, "Return good for evil." I lifted him on to the station barry, covered his bad face wi' a cloot, and trundled him to the door o' his hoose—for, mind ye, he had a fine budie for a wife, and ten bonny weans. The puir wumin wis in tears when I got to the door. We lifted him into his bed, and left him to meet his reason and

his God in the mornin'. Noo, boys, d'ye ken what happened?'

'Na.'

'Na.'

'Na,' was the almost breathless reply of all three listeners.

'Weel, he cam' up to the station next mornin', put oot his hand, and thanked me. I shook it heartily. He slipped something in ma pocket as he went by. It wis a pound note.

'"Man," I said to him, "I wud sooner see ye teetotal than hae yer pound."

'"M'Muckle," says he, "ye've weel earned *that* pound, for I signed the pledge this mornin'. You'll never see me drunk again." D'ye ken, boys, that man hasna looked back since that day. He has fower ferms noo, an' five sons have passed through college.—Jist open that drawer, Tam, an' gie me oot that black box,' concluded the maister abruptly.

Tam pulled open a drawer and handed Maister M'Muckle a black leather-covered box. He opened it and displayed a beautiful set of meerschaum pipes, all silver-mounted. 'Read that, noo.' They looked at a silver plate with the following inscription: 'To Mr John M'Muckle, my best friend, who conquered my Intemperance and Ill-Will. Rob Gordon.'

CHAPTER IV.

'FITBA'.'

THE introduction of Puddin' Broon to the station staff was not for the general peace. Puddin' came from the 'fitba'' district in Pollokshaws. He was fat, short, with a putty nose, Chinese eyes, and an aggressive manner. Having been centre-forward in the Kickemdown Muldoons, he brought with him a vast knowledge of the game. Indeed, Puddin' was an authority on Soccer. He knew the pedigree of Jimmy Quinn and Billy Hogg, and the whole secret history of Queen's Park, the famous amateurs. As a matter of fact, Puddin' was one of the few who had seen (?) the five-pound notes in the Queen's Park boots at the end of a certain game. As for League fixtures, he staggered the booking-office with his knowledge when the Celtic, Rangers, Third Lanark, &c. were 'away' or 'at hame.' All this was not to the liking of Snooker Tam. He, too, had played a distinguished part in a famous junior combination known as the Cowcaddens Cowpunchers. As a matter of fact, Snooker at one time had a retaining fee of sixpence a week and two hot

pies. He was, therefore, no chicken in the football business.

During Maister M'Muckle's absence at dinner one day, the two worthies commenced to discuss football. Puddin', looking over the junior fixtures in the *Evening Times*, happened to remark, 'That'll be a guid match.'

'Whit?' asked Snooker.

'Dobbie's Loan Kooleyjocks *versus* Pollokshaws Zebras.'

'Are ye bettin'?'

'Ay.'

'I'll gie two to wan that Dobbie's Loan wins.'

'I'm on;' and Puddin' plumped tuppence down.

'It's mine—easy.'

'Hoo's that?'

'There's nae combination in Pollokshaws, the forwards canna cohees, and the backs are ower slow. When I played for Cowcaddens we bate them five to wan.'

'Ay, wi' foul play an' ten penalty kicks against ye. I mind the match. But hoo are ye no playin' for them noo?'

'I wanted a transfer to the Kirkbride Chow-Chows, but they wudna gie me ma papers, so I chucked them.'

'Did the Chow-Chows offer to buy yer transfer?' inquired Puddin', who was an

absolute expert in all the technicalities of the football business.

'Ay; the secretary offered them hauf-a-croon an' a ba', an' I wis to get a new jersey an' a pair o' auld Celtic pants; but they widna agree. When I said I wudna play they got me suspended. *Whit dae I care?* When I'm big enough I'll get ma place in the second eleeven o' the Celtics. Ma faither kens a chap that's awfu' chummy wi' anither chap that kens Tam Bailey. Ye need inflooence to get in. I'm a' richt.'

'Mebbe!'

'Ach, you! There's ma badge for batin' the Possilpark Flyaways in the Midget League. Ma photy was in *The Bulletin*.'

'So wis Crippen's.'

'Whit's Crippen got to dae wi' it?'

'He was centre-forward for Barlinnie.'

'Nane o' yer kiddin'.'

'Ye've got to be able to tak' yer place fur a First League team. There's nae inflooence in fitba'. That's whit "Unomi" says in the *People's Journal*.'

'But I ken "Uno" o' the *Weekly News*. He took ma photy at a junior match.'

'It's a peety he didna tak' yer life.'

'Ye're jealous.'

'I'm no.'

'Ye are so.'

'I'm no so.'

'Ye canna blaw aboot yer fitba', onywey. Ye've never had yer name in the *Times* or *News*.'

'But it's been five times in the *Daily Record*. Pit that in yer pipe an' smoke it.'

'That wis to keep ye frae greetin'.'

'It's a hit in the lug ye want.'

'Cheese it! I'm nane o' yer "Kamerad" kind.'

'You'll no pit it on to me, even if I am a wee fellah.'

'Who's pittin' it on to ye?'

'You!'

'Me?'

'Ay, you.

'Peety o' you.'

'Is it?'

'Ay.'

'If ma big brother wis here ye widna blaw yer horn sae much.'

'Whit aboot him?'

'He's the licht-wecht champion o' Pollokshaws Bleach Works.'

'I could bleach him an' you tae.'

'Could ye?'

'Ay could I.'

'Per—haps.'

'Here, ma lad, ye're gettin' ower cocky.'

'You started it, then.'

'It wis you!'

'Na, it wisna.'

'You said I couldna get into the Second Eleeven o' the Celtic.'

'I didna; but you said your faither kenned a chap that kenned anither chap that kenned Tam Bailey. An' you said inflooence can get ye in. I said it wis fitba'.'

'D' ye mean to say I dinna ken hoo to play?' shouted Tam, jumpin' off his stool with fight in his eye.

'No much, onywey.'

'I'll bash yer nose.'

'Ye'll no.'

'Wull I no?'

'Na!' ejaculated Puddin', rousing himself.

'I dinna want to hit ye.'

'It'll no pey ye.'

'Whit wey?'

'I'll stiffen ye.'

'You!'

'Ay, me.'

Tam let drive at Puddin's nose. Puddin' 'jooked' and caught his opponent right under the chin. It was a splendid uppercut.

'Ye wee messin', ye!' roared Tam, closing in; and then the row really began. Chairs, stools, ticket-boxes, paste-pots, books, pens, ink, and blotters were scattered and wrecked all round the room in the des-

perate combat. Both were as game as bantams. If Puddin' was wee, he was tough, and belaboured Tam's nose till the blood came, but in the *mêlée* Puddin' got a bad black eye.

Toot! . . . Toot! . . . shrieked an incoming train.

'Here—hauf-time—there's a train—come on.' Out dashed Tam and his opponent, with blood running all over their faces, and collars torn.

'Kirkbride. . . . Kirkbride. . . . Kirkbride. . . . Kirkbride,' they shouted in the old way as if nothing was amiss. Collecting the tickets with their gory hands, and waving the train out, they then dashed back to the office and renewed the onslaught. There was to be no 'Kamerad' business in this affair.

Biff! . . . Bang! . . . 'Uh!' and on went the battle. Poor Puddin' was just about done when in walked Maister M'Muckle.

'What the deevil's a' this?' he shouted, separating them.

'He said I couldna play fitba',' roared Tam, still mad with anger.

'I didna,' weeped Puddin'.

'Ye rascals! Awa' an' get yer faces washed an' get the place cleaned up. Fitba'! D—— ye! that's the curse o' Glesca.'

CHAPTER V.

THE WAYS OF CATHCART.

CATHCART, thanks to Wullie Weir, has become as important as Berlin, Bagdad, or Jerusalem. From a douce, porridge-loving village on the Cart it has steadily developed into a throbbing township renowned for the making of pumps, guaranteed to suck sea-water, pale ale, or crême de menthe from sea-level to the summit of Ben Nevis. Since the war it has turned out aeroplanes as you turn out sausages. Lumps of steel, wood, nickel, iron, and bronze are simply thrown in at one end, and at the other the R.A.F. get into 'the dickey,' turn the wheel, and zoom off to Ypres, Cologne, or Salonica. Very wonderful, showing the splendid imagination, touch, and finish of all those who hail 'oor Wullie' as peer o' the air, and the chief man in the flying business.

This great development has, of course, changed the ways of old Cathcart. It has destroyed that parochialism which insisted on blinds down on Sunday and all lassies in bed before dark. The solemnity of yore has departed. Men no longer wear their

fathers' still faces, beaver hats, and family frock-coats; while the ladies—the dear ladies—have discarded Mid-Victorian mourning and soor-dook expressions for the irresistible 'come-on-boys' smile, very much enhanced by the trimmings, flounces, silks, satins, and pink ribbons (mustn't forget the ribbons) purveyed by 'The Bonanza,' 'The Poly,' and our dear old friend Wattie Wulson. These changes have added to 'The Hatches, Matches, and Despatches' of *The Herald*, increased the revenue of furniture-making establishments, and generally let loose a flood of life, love, laughter, and weans in the once slow, fire-and-brimstone-worshipping hamlet of Cathcart. *And all through pumps and aeroplanes!*

Such an industry draws to itself the engineering copyists and students of all nations. Walk around and you'll find putty-nosed Japan, slit-eyed China, gaud-dam America, *parlez-vous* France, fag-smoking Spain, and ''Ere, Bill,' England, represented in this new pump-hive of the world. You cannot collect such folk without becoming cosmopolitan. The ladies get sparky, and the men acquire the *blasé* vim of 'Paree,' Bilbao, 'Bauston,' and Pekin. Social conditions depart, and the philosophy of 'The Tango' and *The Merry*

Widow enter in. The eyes that were once as slow as the pools sparkle like the Koh-i-noor, and 'the introduction' goes with a bang. Not that Cathcart rivals Carthage or Pompeii, or even hugs all the tenets of the Latin Quartier. Oh no! It is just more nippy than it used to be, nutty, and a trifle naughty—the usual accompaniments of £, s. d., genius, and push-and-go. The Devil always insists on his dividends when high wages abound. Ask the parsons!

This great development in Cathcart has been a boon to the Cathcart Railway. Before the war Tramway Dalrymple had chased all the tramway horses from 'Glesca' to the sausage-factories of Hamburg and Antwerp. He then installed the wonderful electric cars. For a bawbee you can get a joy-ride which used to cost a shilling in a growler—a development which was loudly acclaimed by all the Isaacs of the Gorbals, and promptly caused thousands of flittings from the Passover haunts to the more salubrious air of Gentile and genteel Mount Florida. Cheap drives to Queen's Park and seats for two at Rouken Glen capped the popularity of the trams, and impelled the cutting down of railway dividends. The cheapest railway in the kingdom looked like fizzling out of its

cheapness and efficiency, but the Cathcart development has naturally helped to keep things right. Train upon train empties its passengers there, for which the railway staff rejoice.

The Black Squad make their own fun. All the 'slaveys' in Queen's Park, Kirkbride, Newlands, &c. now wash their faces in the morning, and *glue* their noses against the windows as the train goes by. Hankies, legs, and bonnets are waved from the passing carriages; later on, many a Highland Flora and many an Irish Bridget finds rest and consolation in the arms of a lad from Weir's. You always cough before going round a corner in Cathcart.

Where there are aeroplanes there are dash, sauce, and sentiment. The flappers of Cathcart have the finest tammies, curls, eyes, and ankles in the world of engineering. They can lure gray-headed fathers on to tramcars, and magnetise bald-headed porters and policemen. The youthful members of the opposite sex are equally daring. To judge from their big bows and American-finished boots, one receives the impression that they are 'the goods,' the best thing in trousers out of Bond Street or Eden.

And now I come to one of these youthful bloods, an apprentice engineer named

Jimmy M'Cloon. Jimmy was a good-looking lad, with a High School ticket, pleasant ways, and was a student of nature. Unknown to Snooker Tam, this engineering Adonis discovered the beauty called Maggie dispensing singles, returns, zones, and seasons to 'Glesca.' When he saw her fine, full, bonny blue eyes and irresistible smile he gasped. He had found a child of Venus! With the dash and resource of a Frenchman, he immediately ordered a first single to Cathcart, followed up by that old wheeze, the weather.

'Ay, it's no bad between shooers,' answered Maggie, who, like all her sex, immediately assessed his virtues and his vices, noting that he was that irresistible mixture of saint and sinner which all girls desire.

'Like a chocolate?' said Jimmy, opening the familiar poke. (M'Coll's, one shilling a quarter.)

'Thanks.'

Toot! . . . Toot! . . . Toot! went the interrupting engine of the incoming train.

'Here, keep the bag,' said Jimmy in his grand way, departing for the train.

'That 's awfu' nice o' ye.'

'Don't mention it—see you again.'

'A' richt,' was the pleasant reply.

He jumped in quite pleased with himself, and blew a kiss as the train went out.

Next morning Maggie received a brief note:

'The Pump Factory, Cathcart.

'Dear Wee Thing,—Meet me to-night at eight at the gate of M'Auslan's Nursery. Yours truly, Jimmy M'Cloon.'

Tam was in the office while she was reading the letter; hence Maggie's blushes and embarrassment.

'Whit 's that?' he asked sharply.

'Naethin'.'

'Naethin'?'

'Na.'

'It is so.'

'It 's no so,' answered Maggie, now more calm.

'Yer face was like a tumatty when ye were readin' it.'

'So wid yours be.'

'Whit wey?'

'Jist!'

'Wis it excitin'?'

'Ay.'

'Tell us.'

'Oor Bella 's got the Spanish flu.'

'Ach! that 's naethin' to be feart aboot. *Ma mither 's got a wuden leg.*'

And so the affair passed off, but Maggie

had a most uncomfortable feeling all that day. She hated the lie, which somehow took the sweetness away from the coming adventure. Still, Tam had only given her tuppence worth of toffee that week. This she considered a sign of waning affection. She was, therefore, committing no crime in going to see the daring lad called Jimmy M'Cloon. If she had only known that Tam had been saving up his pennies to take her to the Metropole, where that thrilling drama, *The Girl who Got her Hair Cut*, was being played, she might have acted differently. But lassies are like that.

Now, Maggie was really honest, even in her preparations. She didn't hide the Sunday blouse under her jacket, or stow away her bangles. Even the wee puff-and-powder tin was used just before leaving that night.

'Whit's up the nicht?' inquired Tam.

'A walk.'

'Who wi'?'

'I'm no shair.'

'Mebbe!'

'It's nane o' your business, onywey.'

'Is that the wey o't?'

'Ay.'

'A' richt! Gie me back ma ring an' stamp phoety.'

'There ye are!' said Maggie, putting

them down. 'Ye can get thae rings an' photys at sixpence a dizzen. Guid-nicht!' And she banged the door. (Tam collapsed.)

'That's done ye, ma lad,' mumbled Puddin', looking up from the pages of *Hairy Mike*.

'Ach! what are you blawin' at?'

'Ye've lost yer lass.'

'What dae I care? There's plenty mair,' Tam uttered grandly; but his looks belied him.

'No mony like Maggie,' piped the mischievous Puddin'.

'Are you efter her tae?'

'Na. It's yin o' Weir's apprentices. An' awfu' nut. I seen him giein her chocolates.'

'It's a lee.'

'It's no a lee. As shair as daith,' said Puddin', spitting on his finger and making the sign of cutting his throat. This, as you know, is proof positive, the last word in moral rectitude.

'Proof!' roared Tam.

Puddin' put his hand in his trousers-pocket and drew out a crumpled paper. Opening it out slowly (devilish slowly to the agonised Tam), he said, 'There, that's the poke that the chocolates were in.' It was a master-stroke, a great revenge for

Puddin's defeat over the 'fitba'' battle, and also an indication that Puddin' had lived in picture-houses, where every trick in the drama is unfolded in such masterpieces as *Jim the Penman*, or *Crippen Nabbed at the Cookhouse Door*.

'Ach! ye're jealous,' roared Tam, going out and banging the door.

Puddin' resumed the reading of the fourth instalment of *Hairy Mike, the Man who Ate the Orang-Outangs of the Alleghany Mountains*. He was well pleased. But outside Tam was tearing his hair and vowing vengeance on every apprentice in Wullie Weir's. In his dreams that night he and Guy Fawkes were 'blawin' up' the great Pump Factory at Cathcart.

CHAPTER VI.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM.

WHEN Snooker Tam was washing his face next morning he resolved on a noble deed. He would forsake the lassies, and strive like a man to get on in his calling. He had often heard Maister M'Muckle say that 'wine an' weemin were the root of a' evil.' That morning he agreed with him. Maggie, he mused, was 'bonny, nice, an' a' that,' but her fickleness had given him 'a sair heid.' He would have no more of it. He would show *her* that he could live without her smiles. And in this mood he entered the booking-office.

'Nice mornin', Tam,' said Maggie sweetly.

'*I'm no speakin'*,' he answered.

'Here's a deaf-an'-dumb alphabet to ye, then,' was the prompt retort.

'Come on, laddies; buck up this mornin'; the Flyin' Squad 's on the road,' interrupted the maister. 'Mak' everybody show their seasons, an' keep yer eye on the Gorbals boys; they 're aye tryin' to get to Jerusalem for naethin'.'

By the way, the Flying Squad is a staff of 'nippy' individuals who suddenly swoop down from the clouds or appear from beneath the flagstones of the lavatory, and startle penurious fathers and fare-dodging office-boys with the cry, 'All seasons ready —all seasons ready.' Not even Charlie Peace can defeat their methods. They know every trick from the rubbing out of dates to the hackneyed lament, 'I've lost it.' It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a dodger to dodge the eyes of the Sherlock Holmeses of the railway.

Tam was really flabbergasted with the exhibition of their shrewdness and dexterity. He found individuals whom he had believed to be pillars of society stumping up excess money for riding first with third-class tickets. Office-boys were discovered with old 'zones,' flappers with antediluvian return halves, and several kirk elders had somehow forgotten to renew their 'seasons' which had expired. In the crisp style of Lord Justice Hawkins they dealt out stern but even-handed justice, and sent off a trainload of red-faced indignants vowing blue blazes and damnation on the system which rent age-long respectability as the wind blows away a straw. For the cultivation of honesty

and dividends there's nothing like the Flying Squad. Set a Scot to catch a Scot.

The Flying Squad vanished from the station in the mysterious way they had come, but Tam alleged that he had seen 'a' their feet stickin' oot beneath the tawpaulin o' a goods-wagon.' However, they had departed, and the Kirkbride staff settled down once more to trust humanity, except those who glaringly defied the unwritten laws of 'jookin' the boy at the gate.'

'By jings! I wud like to be in the Flyin' Squad,' said Tam on entering the booking-office.

'Whit wey?' asked Maggie.

'To nab a' thae jookers o' apprentices in Weir's.'

'They'd mebbe nab ye on the nose.'

'Mebbe. But I forgot—*I'm no speakin'.*'

'Come here, laddies. Here's something you'll need to be sherp aboot,' said Maister M'Muckle, opening a head office letter. He then read slowly out: '"Officials and servants of the Company are requested to keep a sharp look-out for an alien enemy at large, and at present travelling on the railway. He is a man small in stature, with a dark countenance, black hair, and ragged moustache; wears a shabby suit

of torn black clothes; and speaks with a distinct foreign accent. Officials are authorised to detain him, and report to the Criminal Investigation Department that they have done so, when arrangements will be made for his removal to safe custody. —(Sgd.) John M'Harrie, Superintendent of the Line." Noo, boys, keep yer eyes skinned. If ye get him, I 'll gie ye hauf-a-croon, an' get yer photy in *The Bulletin.*'

'I 'll hae a shot at it,' said Tam.

'So wull I,' declared Puddin', recalling in a flash all the methods of Derek Clyde, Sexton Blake, and Sherlock Holmes.

'I 'll help ye,' ventured Maggie.

'Ach, you! Whit dis a lassie ken aboot catchin' Germans?' was Puddin's scornful remark.

'You ken mair aboot German sausages,' was Maggie's quick retort as she turned to her books.

The boys then went out to a train, and from that minute commenced the man-hunt. The innocent had to suffer for the guilty. Many a decent man whose features showed that his great-great-grandmother had flirted with the dark-skinned sailors shipwrecked from the Armada was put through the hoop. As it was war-time, and they had suffered everything from a bent nose on a lamp-post in a darkened

thoroughfare to a reduced corporation through camouflaged war-bread and wagon-grease margarine, they bore the boys' scrutiny with patience, and trembled at this, the latest, manifestation of the all-powerful and knee-shaking D.O.R.A. All except one. This was an aggressive tike carrying a small, round bundle on his shoulder.

'Jings! here he is,' muttered Tam, feeling for his gully-knife.

'I believe ye're richt,' answered Puddin', whose picture-house training promptly suggested the closing of the gate and putting his back against it. The man arrived at his questioners.

'Are ye a German?' demanded Tam.

This stupid beginning annoyed Puddin'. Sexton Blake would never have commenced in a way likely to throw the man on his guard, so he quickly interjected a remark likely to rouse the suspect's wrath, and thus reveal his foreign accent. The remark was, 'Get your hair cut.' Now, any Briton asked if he was a German, and then told to get his hair cut, would naturally get his monkey up.

'A German! Ye wee whelps o' h——! *I'm a plumber;*' and with a well-directed kick he got Puddin' on the region that keeps the stool warm, while Tam received

'a clout' on his head. Throwing the gate open, the plumber passed through in high dudgeon, while Puddin' rubbed the afflicted region with his hand.

'That's a blue doo,' mumbled Tam.

'It's a gey sair doo, if ye ask me,' replied Puddin', entering the booking-office.

'You an' yer Sexton Blake!' grinned Maggie, who had seen the incident. 'D'ye no ken a plumber yet?' she demanded.

'Hoo did *you* ken he was a plumber?' shouted Tam.

'Wi' the patches on the sate o' his troosers.'

'Oh!'

'Ay!'

'Whit wey?'

'Jist!'

'Tell us, then.'

'They aye weer oot their troosers sittin' oot time on a job.'

'Ach! ye're a blether.'

'I'm no. Ma faither's a plumber.'

'Is he? Oh, I forgot—*I'm no speakin'*.'

Toot! Toot! Toot! went another engine, and the boys rushed out again, quite determined to show Maggie that they 'werena as saft as they were cabbage-lookin'.'

Only one passenger got out, a queer person—in brief, a cross between a half-baked organ-grinder and an old-clothes man. He answered to the description already given, and the glint in his eyes suggested dirty work at the cross-roads. On his back he carried a black bundle, like the brothers Cohen on the music-hall stage—a bundle likely to contain anything from auld breeks to live bombs.

'Jings, it's him!' said Tam, opening his gully-knife.

'I believe ye're richt,' assented Puddin', drawing the booking-office ruler out of a leg of his trousers. It was adorned with a spike in the style of a trench-bludgeon.

Meanwhile the enemy was approaching.

'Wull I jab him?' inquired Tam, feeling the edge of his gully in the style of a barber.

'Ay, if he jooks. But if he's daicent, we'll arrest him. Ye'd better leave the cross-examination to me.'

'A' richt, Sexton Blake!

The gent drew nearer. He hadn't shaved for months. His mouth was 'slavery,' and the look on his face was in keeping with a Neapolitan looking for murder.

'Halt!' roared Puddin'.

The man halted. This is, I may say, the correct procedure in detecting the disciplined German; hence Puddin's remark, 'Crickey! it's him richt enough.'

'Whit's yer name?' demanded Puddin', holding the ruler at the charge.

'Signor Pedro Ikeybitch Gobalmy.'

'Wha was yer faither?'

'I know no what you maket me speak,' declared the alien gentleman, getting roused. 'You wantet de ticket. I beesy. I must goes my beesneeses.'

'Haud on a meenit, auld tickey whiskers.'

'What for you callet me tickey viskers? You no gendarme.'

'Jist!'

'Shist?'

'Can ye speak German?'

'Of Sherman I know not of. What for you asket?'

To the trained ear of Puddin', the words 'know not of' were direct proof that he was wangling.

'Here, funny face, are ye a German?' said Tam, who had grown a bit weary of Puddin's windy tactics.

'Ah!' he shrieked, 'you are dam fools. I Italiano, son of Conte Pussialano, and brudder of Frederick Antonio Isaaypee Gobalmy.'

'Ye're a liar.'

'Why for you callet me dam bad names?' he shouted, throwing his bag on the ground.

'Steady on, Pedro; show me yer papers!'

'For why you asket? I respectables. My brudder keepit isaay-creama shop in Poleekshaws. I no moneys. My brudder Frederick maket de plenty. He suet you poleesa court.'

'We're no talkin' aboot suet. We're talkin' aboot the Germans.'

'I tellet you me Italiano. Ma fadder fight for Garibaldi.'

'Garibaldi wis a German.'

'You thicket de head. One dam fools you be. Letit me go. I have beesneeses.'

'Here, come on wi' us,' ordered Tam.

'What for?'

'Ye're a spy.'

'Spy!' he shrieked. 'My brudder's Giovanni, fight as Alpine soldat. Emmanuel my king, no Kaiser. Me been here ten years, keepit de monkeys and italiano organ, and sellit stukey man, hokey-pokey, an' isaay-creama for ma brudder Frederick. Letit me go.'

'Na; come on.'

Tam and Puddin' seized him and half-dragged, half-carried him to the waiting-room.

'Jings! ye've got something this time,' said Maggie, as she watched the struggle.

'Ay, it's him a' richt,' said Tam, pressing him through the waiting-room door. They relieved him of his bundle, and emptied his pockets of all documents, &c. To the loud laments of Pedro, they retired with the spoil for a council of war. Unfortunately Maister M'Muckle was at dinner. But the boys carried on.

'My brudder Frederick killet you with beeg steeletto,' shouted Pedro from behind the door.

'Ach, awa'!' said Tam, passing into the booking-office.

Puddin' meantime had opened the big black cloth sack. Macaroni, garlic, onions, breeks, bowlers, needles, laces, 'stukey' dolls, chewing-gum, hokey-pokey, and last, but not least, *a small camera, a map of Scotland, and a notebook with notes in a strange language.*

'There!' said Puddin' triumphantly.

'Jings! ye're richt,' muttered Tam.

'Tak' care he's no an Italian plumber,' said Maggie.

'Ach, you!—*I'm no speakin'.*'

Other discoveries revealed the life and works of Signor Pedro Ikeybitch Gobalmy. He had travelled Scotland from Dobbie's Loan to the fish-curing smoke-racks of

Buckie. He had lived in every gentleman's 'model' from Burns's in Watson Street to the palatial and salubrious abodes in the Overgate of Dundee. Of women he was apparently a connoisseur, for he had stamp photos of everything from a mantilla-covered signorina to the shawled denizens of the Saltmarket and Lochee. He was a knight of the road, a twentieth century macaroni buccaneer.

Puddin', being a man of action, sprang to the phone. He was put on to the C.I.D.

'Hello!' said a Hielanman at the other end.

'We've got him,' shouted Puddin'.

'Who haf you got?' demanded Donald.

'Him!'

'Ach! whateffer do I know of him? Is she a he or a she?'

'A he.'

'But who is she?'

'The German spy.'

'Ta spy! Well, well! I'll tell ta chief. She'll be oot there in a meenit.'

Donald was very *blasé* on the subject, for since 1914 the police have had to interview thousands of individuals whose only connection with Germany was the possession of a fat head, a thick neck, pebble eyeglasses, and elastic-sided boots.

'What in the name o' Heeven 's a' this?'

inquired Maister M'Muckle, on returning from his dinner.

'The man!' ejaculated Puddin'.

'What man?'

'The Ger-man.'

'Oh man! oh man! that's rale excitin'.'

'He's in the waitin'-room,' said Tam.

'Ay, I can hear that;' for Pedro was wailing and gnashing his teeth and vowing an age-long vendetta on the 'dam Bambinos' who had placed him there.

A knock at the booking-office door.

'Come in,' said Maggie.

'Good-morning. Good-morning,' muttered a very alert member of the C.I.D. To Puddin' he looked the real thing—the Keystone, Hepworth, and Pathé brand.

'Is this his stuff?' he said, getting to business at once.

'Ay,' said Puddin'.

'Umph! A vagrant or a hawker—looks like a mare's-nest.'

'Na, it's no,' spoke up Tam, very much offended.

'Evidence, boy; evidence,' was the matter-of-fact reply.

'There ye are,' said Puddin', placing the map, the camera, and the notebook before him.

The detective opened his eyes and muttered an 'Oh!'

There was a breathless excitement in the booking-office. Maggie was getting palpitation.

'Queer! Queer!' said the great man, looking over the map, and immediately spotting greasy fingers at certain Clyde ports. These marks and the camera roused him.

'Gey suspeecious, is it no?' inquired Puddin'.

'Yes. I'll see him. Come on.'

Tam and Puddin' headed the procession proudly, while the maister and Maggie followed in a breathless manner. This was greater than the Crippen affair. Pedro heard them coming. His Neapolitan passions being thoroughly aroused, he determined to make one great attempt to get through that door and on 'with his beesneeses.' But the observant Puddin' noted how the great man slipped a hand into a hip-pocket as the key was turned. This convinced the juvenile amateur that he was in the presence of a master-mind. The door slowly opened (too slowly for Pedro). He was just about to make his desperate spring, when the square shoulders and piercing eyes of Lieutenant Catchall rooted him to the ground. The personal magnetism of the C.I.D. is renowned. Here it was in being. Pedro shivered. He had

seen the galleys in Italy where men had to live without salt.

'I am innocents!' he shrieked when the tension gave way.

'Are ye?' mumbled Tam.

'Keep quiet, boy,' commanded Catchall. Then, turning swiftly on Pedro in a style akin to the French police, he rapped out, 'Where have you come from?'

'Poleekshaws, signor.'

The audience collapsed, but the great detective smothered his feelings and coldly asked, 'What's in the book?'

'My beesneeses.'

'What's your business?'

'I sellit de stukey man, hokey-pokey, and isaay-creama for ma brudder Frederick.'

'But what are these funny signs and entries?'

'Ah, signor, I no know your languidge. In Italy I no go school. I must maket de signs. See, signor, for Glasco I maket dees signs.'

(Glasgow.)

(Cathcart.)

(Crosshill.)

'I see! I see!' said the 'tec, quite satisfied, for he had a knowledge of foreign

ways. And then he fired another shot. Lifting the camera, he said, 'Explain the meaning of this. No alien is allowed to have a camera.'

'That's nicked him,' whispered Puddin'.

'Signor, you Inglese thick in de head. You no much de savee. 'Tis very innocents—very innocents,' said Pedro, with a shrug of his shoulders, and a humorous twinkle in his eye.

'Keep to the point. Why have you got the camera?'

'For leetle, leetle boys, signor.'

'But why have you been carrying it?'

'I sellit cameras for ma brudder Frederick.'

'Oh!'

'You think me spy, signor?'

'Not yet.'

'Ah, you Inglese prince!'

'Yes; but cut out all this nonsense. What are you doing with this?'

'To maket de leetle boys laught.'

'Laugh?'

'I showet you,' said Pedro, taking the camera. Putting his finger on a stop, he said, 'I taket all your photographs.' Then, to the horror of Puddin', the lid of the camera flew open, and an imitation cobra about four feet in length sprang out and hit Puddin' on the nose.

'Here, cheese it,' he roared.

'Ach, *you* for a Sexton Blake!' exclaimed Maggie. 'He's another plumber;' and she left the room. The detective grinned for the first time. But he had still one more question to ask. Opening up Pedro's map, he asked him to explain why all the coast towns on the Clyde were marked.

'You thinket me spy, eh?'

'Not yet.'

'I tellet you. When summer come, ma brudder Frederick he sendit me Rothesay, Dunoons, Larks, Gourocks with de hokey-pokey, isaay-crema barra. When de rains comet at Greenock, I go Rothesay. When de Gorbals Jews comet Dunoon, I go Larks. When de moneys all feenish, I comet back to ma brudder Frederick in Poleekshaws. 'Tis de truth, oh great signor!' Pedro concluded, making the sign of the Cross.

'Pack up and get off. You're not a spy.'

'I tank you, signor, but I suet dees dam boys at Poleekshaws Poleesa Offis.'

'It's a lump o' suet ye need for yer denner,' said Tam.

'I maket de vendetta. Ma brudder Frederick and all his childrens will killet you,' shouted Pedro, as he picked up his macaroni, auld breeks, and bowlers.

The detective withdrew, with a hint to

the boys that they had better give Pedro something to keep him quiet.

'Ay, boys, ye maun dae that,' was Maister M'Muckle's advice. 'We canna hae the Company sued in the polis-office.'

The boys adjourned to discuss peace terms.

'I'll gie him three-dee if ye gie him a tanner,' suggested Tam.

'That's no even,' replied Puddin'.

'Ach! but it wis you that did a' the jawin'.'

'You said he wis a German.'

'So did you, and I wis jist yer apprentice.'

'Ye're aye an apprentice at the money job. But I'll gie him a tanner. We're no mean in Pollokshaws.'

The ninepence was duly handed over to Pedro, who melted into smiles, and instead of threatening to take them to the 'Poleekshaws Poleesa Offis,' he gave Puddin' the camera, cobra and all. They waved him cheerfully out of the gate, and returned to the booking-office.

'Here, boys, you'll hae to stop this man-hunt. Never mind aboot Germans, an' get on wi' yer job.'

'That's richt, Maister M'Muckle,' added Maggie. 'They're daft.'

'Wha's daft?' demanded Tam.

'You!'

'Me?'

'Ay, you.'

'Whit wey?'

'Jist!'

'Ach, you! . . . Oh, I forgot. *I'm no speakin' to you.*'

CHAPTER VII

LIFE AT 'THE CENTRAL.'

ALL this about Snooker Tam and life on the railway must surely convince the shrewd observer that a station is in its own way a land of fun—indeed, a minor university. For the study of human nature it is almost unrivalled, for here all nations, all creeds, all kinds of people gather. If Shakespeare had been a porter on the Cathcart Circle, or, better still, the Chatham and Dover line, Shylock would have made his entrance in green corduroys, saying, 'Carry your bag, sir?' and would have effected his exit mumbling, 'Thank you, sir—thank you.' Barrie ought to have been a ticket-collector in Thrums, for this would have enabled him to place express-drivers in heaven and 'locals' in h——. Instead of writing *What Every Woman Knows*, he might have expatiated on 'What every porter yells'—('Change here for Auchtermuchty, Ecclefechan, an' Mulguy'). Bernard Shaw, no doubt, would have produced a satire on *The Duke who Gave me a Tanner;* while Arnold Bennet, as usual, would

have assaulted his own class (the middle middle) by a volcanic production vomiting flames and lava under the title of *Third Class—Oh Gawd!*

There are fortunes on railway platforms. Indeed, railway companies actually offer something for nothing. This is a bait sufficiently tempting to drag the scribes from Jerusalem and the Jews from Aberdeen, or, rather, *the Jew*, for ('tis said) there is only one Jew in Aberdeen. All they have got to do is to buy a penny notebook and a halfpenny pencil, then stand at the ticket-office, book-stall, or, better still, the refreshment-bar, and there jot down a thrilling serial entitled *Faces of Harpies, Heroes, and Hobos, or, the Tale of the Travellers who Swallow the Scotch.*

But to get a glimpse of all this, go to the Central, say at 10 P.M., when the lights are up and the Devil is out; for, mark you, His Satanic Majesty does not appear very much in the day-time. This rule was adopted to save confusion and commotion in typing-bureaus and on the Stock Exchange. The electric light somehow affects the passions as it does the sale and rise of spirits, and the world is more natural, more naughtily naughty, at ten than at five. Everybody knows that. Ask your father.

Sit down on a barrow and watch the crowd. You will be amused, amazed, and educated. Faith, Hope, and Charity; Love, Bigamy, and Divorce, go sweeping by wholly unconscious that their joys, their sorrows, or their tricks are being recorded. Every eye is a sentence, every face a chapter, and each couple a seventy-five-thousand word comedy or drama. Six-bob novels galore; ten-thousand-pound plays; and, now and again, a devil like Nero or a hussy like Lady Hamilton exuding 'copy' for a Tolstoy or a Zola. Ah, how merry, how brilliant, how daring, and, at times, how sad! Merry, indeed, when youth, sweet and undefiled, walked past hand-in-hand, treading to heaven with the aid of threepence worth of candies and the thrilling memories of a glorious evening for sixpence in the gods. No guile! No sin! No camouflage! Sweet as the brook and cheerful as the lark. Unconsciously they stagger the roué with their purity, and cheer the wearied parson with their godlike optimism and sinless gaiety. They chatter their thoughts aloud, for 'form,' with all its eyewash, is not in their keeping. They have not fallen, and need not be *blasé*. Faith is their gospel, Hope their anchor, and Charity their pride.

Were it not for the sweet nobility of youth and its irresistible laughter, life would be a pit of gloom and the day's darg a round of misery. Youth is an elixir. Youth is God!

Then watch the daring, douce men who have wired home, 'Working late in the office,' and who blandly scurry past with a theatre programme in the pocket and other women's tales ringing, ringing in their souls; for this old game was told by Omar Khayyam, rediscovered by Kipling behind the screen at Simla, and is played twice nightly and at matinées on Saturday. Douce men! There are none so douce as the skilled philanderers who cover their sins with 'overtime,' and save their souls by bellowing out the Hundredth Psalm on the 'Sawbath.' For all that, they are hunted creatures, awaiting the blow; and the blow always comes. Wives can use the telephone, and when the Exchange says, 'No reply,' the devil of doubt arises, and out into the murky night step angry wives with gamps at the charge. Many a douce man has had his hat knocked off with an umbrella, and his lady charmer sent shrieking into the darkness minus hair-net and switch. '*Working late in the office*'! What tricks are covered 'neath that name!

Still more daring is the Gertie Golightly tripping on her toes and working her eyes like railway signals. Obviously 'munitions,' deliberately cutting a dash with a wonderful coat made out of the skins of controlled rabbits, a muff that was once an old maid's dog, a dress in the style of old Greece, crowned with a hat resembling an improvised halo or a pancake on the skite. She swings her varnished Dorothy bag like the pendulum of a clock, and sweeps her Louis the Fourteenth umbrella in the style of a drum-major of the Guards. Quite impressive! Not a bad show!—baffling even a detective to know whether she is the Honourable Matilda Ticklemeup or Phyllis Go-hawn, leading lady of the *What Ho!* revue. Baffling—yes, until one draws near and notes that the lips have been over-rouged, and the cheeks too violently assaulted with the flour-bag. Still, that would not damn an apparent half-cousinship with some munition K.B.E. Indeed, she causes such an impression that a dozen lads of the village are stalking her home. Alas! on reaching a carriage, she shatters a thousand illusions when an old woman in a bashed hat shouts, 'Whaur hae ye been, Mary Ann?'

'Buyin' black puddin's in Argyle Street, an' *nae* coupons, maw.' As she takes her

seat the lads of the village discreetly melt into the night, inwardly muttering, 'Oh Lor'! Oh Lor'!'

With all this wonderful copy about, why those unrealities in fiction and in drama? Real life is a mint of tragedy and comedy, a fount of love and scorn, an irresistible magnet to those who know psychology and can analyse the 'Haw, haw!' of the snob and the 'Hee, hee!' of the swab. Men and women are plain books unless they come from China. Chinamen baffle even Sherlock Holmes.

But we must get on, for there approaches a vision of Joy and of Love. A woman, of course; a woman beautified by maternity, for clinging to her hands are bonny girls and boys. Golden-tinted curls, sparkling blue eyes, red cheeks, chubby legs, and all dressed like Cupids and fairies. All turn to look—they cannot help doing so, for this is a bit of heaven come down to earth. Many another mother smiles as she goes by; ay, and childless women drop their heads and go past with a still fiercer craving for the motherhood denied them. Unconscious of all the joy and pathos they arouse, mother and bairns prattle on to the train, she entering into all their pretty blethers with the zest of a babe, laughing with them about the pantomime,

shrieking again at the antics of the clown, and promising them all the Kingdom of Heaven, as every tactful mother ought to do.

'Let me sit beside you, mama,' says one.

'Me *too*, ma.'

'And *me!—me*, ma!' demands the youngest of the clan.

At last they are disposed of, to the amusement and joy of the crowd, and during the journey entertain the company with their mingled bashfulness and bravado. And *yet* we spend three pounds on a box to see a *murder* in the theatre or an *abduction* in the music-hall! What fools we are!

No wonder Snooker Tam grew wise on such a system, for he, like his fellows, rubbed shoulders with the whole world. And what a world! Civilisation tuned up for adventure; men and women bent on business, travel, education, pleasure, love, crime, and Christianity. Hustling and bustling! Black-eyed Bengalis with missionary funds in their pockets and the murder of English Rajahs in their hearts. Ministers with God in a brief-bag and the hope of greater stipend wearing out their souls. Jews wanting to be Gentiles, and Gentiles wanting to be Jews. Commercial travellers, flush with orders, red with

wine, and not in the least embarrassed with the love of a hundred barmaids. Aristocrats scorning the men of the middle classes and ogling their women; the *nouveau riche* alarming the porters and dogs with salmon-coloured stockings, red ulsters, and canary-yellow hats. Blind men tapping the pavement with sticks, and drunk men sounding it with their heads. Home service officers in corsets, brown polish, and brasso. V.C.'s and D.S.O.'s in mud and rags. Women treading to heaven, and others making for Hong-kong. Flappers, pretty and impulsive, playing with the fires that have cost kings their jobs and footmen their 'characters.' Dogs howling for admission to the refreshment-bar, where the master is vying with Falstaff; and cats praying to Heaven for the silent hours of night, and —a wee, wee mouse. Yes, that is the scene, as thrilling as the retreat from Mons, amusing as Charlie Chaplin, and as sentimental as *The Only Way*. But to all this most people are blind. We are a one-eyed race, specialists in a thousand callings, all useful, even necessary, but bereft of that imagination and sympathy which come from true reading, intelligent study, and the determination to know things as they are. To *feel* is the grand

secret, the priceless gift of Churchmen, statesmen, and true kings. Those who *know* can command; those who *don't* know must carry the burden of the donkey and take the abuse of the dog. But again we are wandering, for there is still more to see.

It is chivalry—a Highland officer of the 51st in the glory of his tattered tartans, with a balmoral cocked in the style of a Murray or a Lochiel. Brave and braw as our own Prince Charlie, warm and passionate as Rob Roy, fleet as the deer, and strong as those hairy-chested gillies who are the pride of the hills. He steps with the jaunt of the gallant, salutes his men like a courtier, and to the fair has the bearing of a gentleman of France. By his side walks a lady, beautiful, yet sad; proud of her lover, but rent with grief at the leave which is ending. Ah God! we protest against the brutalities of war. We plead for an ending of such ghastly things. Men made in your image, with the beauty of Apollo and the wisdom of Homer, sent out to be butchered in a shambles or withered by a shell. This, too, in an age when wisdom is handy and reason is with us. If Christ did not die to avert these horrors, then for what was He crucified? Or is it that we have all come short of the glory of God, and deified

Kaisers? If so, then whip us out of our sins, and save such beautiful men from a *Kultur* broad-based on vulgar ambition and impregnated with the lust and greed of monarchs and sultans. One Crucifixion should suffice for all eternity.

The leaving of the troop-trains, like the coming of the wounded, is as sad as the death of Captain Oates or the passing of 'K.' And yet there is consolation, for these men are heroes—sons of Picts, Celts, Angles, Jutes, and Normans; fit rivals to Bruce and Wallace, as dauntless in chivalry as the old Crusaders, and far sterner men than they who climbed the Heights of Abraham or died at Waterloo. Away with this taunt of decadence! Men who have faced gas, H.E. bombs, darts, Maxims, tanks, aeroplanes, and shrapnel must surely be supreme to the armies of Moore, Clive, Wolfe, and Wellington. And despite the pain and the horrors, they chant the ditties of the halls and mimic the antics of the jester and the clown. The optimism of these islands is a far, far better thing than the wealth of our Exchequer. It saved us in August 1914, also in March 1918, when 'dug-outs' started to pray instead of hitting with the right. Thank God for our Harry Lauders and Spud Tamsons!

At all points of the station human nature is revealed. Watch the book-stall, where 'Tom,' a descendant in spirit of Samuel Johnson, looks over his glasses at the surging crowd demanding everything from the New Testament to the *Pink 'Un*. The genial bookseller knows his man—every time. To the solemn gentleman in an egg-stained frock-coat, black tie, white dicky, and 'heaven by instalments' sticking out of his pockets, the bookseller offers, instinctively, the *Temperance News*, *British Weekly*, and *The Government Report on the Clothing of Hottentots*. Up steps an alluring flapper in low blouse, perforated stockings, and Bohemian bows on her footwear—*London Opinion*. Next, a gentleman, underfed, long hair, black Trotsky hat, Snowden's eyes, and Macdonald's baggy trousers—*The Forward, Clarion, Daily News*, and, if he can bang a sixpence, *The Nation*. And then the old aristocrat, check tweeds, monocle, Wellington nose, piercing orbs, and a general attitude of 'Damn Democracy!' What does he want? *The Daily Record?* Heavens, no! *The Morning Post*. The artisan with 'hauf-a-croon on the Celtic,' or the 'perjink budie' who is a member of the Hyndland Anti-Pianola Society (the walls of Hyndland are like postage-stamps), grabs *The Evening*

Times to devour gossip and grumbles; while the good lady who subsidises the Free Kirk and sews wee semmits for little Kaffir boys (generally too short) is supplied with that organ of age-long respectability, *The People's Friend*. Authors, artists, actresses, councillors, and expectant O.B.E.'s fight for *The Bulletin*, *Daily Sketch*, and *Mirror*, for, as you know, these publications reproduce the mighty in their pyjamas and delinquents in 'the dock.' And frequently one may observe a ship's company from Inveraray solemnly discussing the investing of one whole penny in a copy of *The Evening News* to see whether Para Handy has been 'loupin' the boom' at Greenock or shoving the 'neb o' his boat' into the belly of a whale at Rothesay.

As for books, human nature is much the same. Stout-built hussies with Sauchiehall Street eyes, meat-market musquash coats, and white-topped boots get a shilling's worth of Victoria Cross, two shillings' worth of Elinor Glyn, and a peep, *free of charge*, at the first chapter of *The Rosary*. Staid professors, bent on philosophy and interested in widows, inquire the price of Emerson, and, *when no one is looking*, plump six shillings down for *The Pretty Lady*, and —scoot. Ministers nod to Wells and lift Tolstoy; publicans show a preference for

Nat Gould; housemaids are after Charles Garvice; kind, wise, old souls reverently lift J. M. Barrie; while the lawyers examine everything, so as to keep abreast of the times, then, in the style of the Court of Session, take a twopenny diary. But the great mass are not particular—anything from *John Bull* to *The Passing Show*. The crowd demands amusement, and no country in the world possesses such alluring railway book-stalls as ours.

Let us not forget the railway staff, who, like the men on all other railways, are conspicuous for their courtesy. Nationalisation might be a good thing for the country, but it is doubtful whether a Government system can produce the sterling and wonderful types at present on our railways. Look at the station-master, with his gold-braided top-hat, frock-coat, proud air, and cavalier manners! As he walks along, the crowd instinctively make way for this grandee of the line. Dukes bow to him, M.P.'s throw a nod, directors wave a salute, and the ladies *simply beam* when he sweeps his top-hat in the style of King Charles when taking the air in Whitehall. He is more than a showman—a sort of chief ambassador; and at times, especially the Fair Holidays, he becomes, perforce, a czar. This modern

station-master is one of the school of Geddes, Jackson, Mathieson, Barrie, Cooper, Downes, Thomson, Calthorp, Fay, and Stanley — brilliant organisers, and ever courteous to those who respect their calling; for a railway official in the great war was just as important as Beatty, as Haig. Without the railways we should have lost the war.

The other ranks resemble their chiefs. Where can you discover such jolly-looking old buccaneers as the railway guards, the express guards in particular? Merry men and wise, their heads filled with a great experience; for, in the main sleeping-saloons, have they not seen kings in bed, statesmen without their false teeth, and great ladies flitting about in kimonos? Honeymooners galore! M.P.'s on the bu'st! And munition kings in purple vests and blue drawers! Distinctly conservative, showing the Tory into the quiet berth with a stately bow, and the Radical to the bed *over the wheels* with a frigid nod. Psychologists all, they can smell a railway director, and scent out the manager's friends. Wizards as well, for, during the staggering shortage of Highland Dew, the man of the world simply pressed the bell, winked the right eye, and for a silver coin got a glass of water from the reservoir of

Glenlivet or Kilmarnock. Saccharine in the morning cup? No! Sugar! Every time!

Oh wonderful guards!

And the engine-drivers! Big as Hercules, stronger than Samson, and often bearded like Rob Roy. An inspiration for any artist when standing on the foot-plate. Cautious as a rule, but daring, even reckless, when the N.B. or the Midland express tries to steal their record time. Then, with teeth set, fire roaring, and sparks flying, they go hell for leather and the honour of 'The Line.' Know the road? Rather! Blindfolded they can tell when nearing the sweat-rags of Polmadie, the jam-fields of Carstairs, the ding-dong shuntings of Carlisle, or the roar of London town. We always hear of the accidents, but *never* a line about the comfortable journeys and the jolly holidays we have had.

Every man with a sweat-rag deserves a bonus and 'a rise.'

It is indeed difficult to mention all the branches of the railway, but never forget the porter. He may be a very humble person, but he is indispensable. Like Snooker Tam, he is as cheery as the lark and as obliging as Maister M'Muckle. And why shouldn't he get his 'tips'? When he secures a corner seat, rugs, and pillows,

and turns the key in the door for a blessed honeymoon couple or an important business deal, surely he is worthy of his hire. Like the barber, he always knows somebody who spoke to somebody who used to play 'jinkers' with Lloyd George or ate caramels with Bonar Law. As he humps the bags along he willingly discusses Free Trade and free beer, and now and again gives his patrons a tip for Celtic Park or the Derby. A blithe fellow! An honest man! Picturesque, even romantic! Fit representative of the railways which have brought us wealth, laughter, culture, and fame. Yes, the railway is a wonderful university. A fine job to sharpen the wits and develop the kindly philosophy of Snooker Tam.

CHAPTER VIII.

'ALL SEASONS READY.'

THERE was no doubt about Jimmy M'Cloon's attention to the spirit of Romance. Post-cards, letters, or bits of his dull-coloured yellow hair arrived by every post. He was irrepressible. From infancy he had chanted:

> 'Bee baw babity,
> Babity, babity, babity,
> Bee baw babity,
> Kiss a bonnie wee lassie.'

His ardour captivated the simple soul of bonny Maggie. It was the dawn of another world. She was whirled into all the joyful and sorrowful routine of love. She was fond of Jimmy, for Jimmy *always* had 'a quarter' of Birrell's or M'Coll's love lozenges. She was also fond of Tam; but Tam, unaware of the 'quarters,' was still dealing in pennyworths of 'black ba's' or eucalyptus-drops. He had not tumbled to this important matter—yet. Measured by their respective gifts, Jimmy was a winner, Tam a loser. She would have liked to have them both, but Tam was none of your second-fiddlers. He had no

need to be; certainly not. No fewer than five of 'the wee slaveys' of the suburb made it their business to call daily to inquire if there were 'ony persels for the hoose.' Tam attended to their wants, much to Maggie's dislike, for she was queen of the booking-office, and resented any intrusions in her own domain. But Tam, being of the perspicacious order, quickly used these visits for stirring the green-eyed monster, and eventually worsting the exalted Jimmy M'Cloon. Like Foch, he was never in a hurry. The gradual assault on a boasted impregnability tells in the end. Meantime, the variety of his duties and the need of 'keepin' Puddin' doon' occupied all his attention. Not that Tam really disliked Puddin', but he had a vendetta against Pollokshaws. Like the battle of the Boyne to an Irish Maloney, Pollokshaws always roused Tam to scorn and fury. Vendettas in boy-life are usually caused by the most simple things; 'fitba',' stolen 'bools,' an unmerited 'skelp on the lug' are quite sufficient to implant in the youthful minds a hatred which lasts until they discard their knickerbockers for long trousers. In the case of Tam, it was difficult at first to discern the reason for his antipathy. But Puddin', skilled student

of Sexton Blake, gradually pieced together little remarks and discovered the clue. And—would you believe it?—it all originated in a stolen drink of 'soor-dook.' According to Puddin', Tam had once attended a school picnic at Lochgoilhead. Each of the company received the usual 'poke,' consisting of a hot pie and a big round scone with three grains of sugar crying 'Lost!' on the top. The liquid refreshment was buttermilk, affectionately known in the best circles as 'soor-dook.' Tam got his tinnyful all right, but while he was indulging in a scramble for some spare scones, a tubby-nosed apprentice from Pollokshaws Bleach Works had bagged his tinny, soor-dook an' a'. There was a fight, of course; *but Tam didna win.* Hence the vendetta against Pollokshaws. For this crime poor Puddin' had to go through the hoop. Puddin', however, tried to live down the bad name of his well-known burgh. He exchanged a shilling gully-knife for a sixpenny blade, and offered a lace out of a Third Lanark football in return for a pipe-cover once used by Billy Hogg. He even assumed (in that stage) the literary education of Tam, and initiated him into all the blessings of his library—*Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island, The Ha'penny Marvel, Union Jack, Boy's Friend,*

and *Jumpin' Jake, the Iron-Chested Man of California.* These attentions certainly mitigated to a great extent the regrettable past; but now and again fuel was added to the hidden flames by the indiscreet action of a Pollokshaws message-boy who blandly offered a dusty old concert ticket faked up as a 'zone.' So there existed a veiled neutrality, pleasant enough on pay-days, when their jaws were sticky with candy, but very much strained on Saturday evenings, when they read the junior football notes in the *Times, Citizen,* and *News.* However, like a man and his wife, these boys were united against all comers, as will be shown.

There has always been a standing feud between the High School boys and the laddies at the stations. This has its origin in social enmities, for the genteel are aye up against the gamin. And no doubt the high spirits of the High School had to be expended, either in breaking windows, cutting railway cushions, ringing rheumaticky ladies' door-bells, or, better still, baiting all the tow-headed boys who took the tickets at the gate. In this war the schoolboys were led by Conkie M'Beetle. Conkie had a nose like the King of Bulgaria, a tummy like Hindenburg, and a pair of calves like those you

see attached to stout ladies paddling at Rothesay. At maths. he was dense, but at Rugger he could heave his way in and out of any scrum in which the Academy, Dollar, Greenock, or Ayr 'fancied their chance,' to use a local Rugby expression. The head of the scrum naturally led the assault on the boy-porters. Little things caused bloody battles. For example, the order issued by the railway company that everybody *must* show his season-ticket caused a terrific commotion on the Cathcart Circle. The manager was quite right, for his staff was reduced, and all his expert face-readers had gone to study pimple-headed Fritz, who at that time was endeavouring to take (without payment) season tickets to Calais, Paris, and the Leicester Lounge. Hence the order. Hence, too, the indignation of God-fearing passengers, who, somehow, imagined they were classed with those who drop buttons and bad pennies into the church offertory. But living, as they were, under the shadow of D.O.R.A., an Act by which you could be shot at dawn for saying Lloyd George or Milner blows his nose on a dirty hanky, they complied with a grunt. Not so the High School boys. Showing season tickets was much too democratic. To ask a boy clad in a chocolate cap, a chocolate blazer, and

chocolate stockings with yellow rings to show his 'season,' somehow, appeared to them like asking the King for a reference. No; they would see the railway in blue blazes, Hong-kong, or Helabooloodoo before they would display their tickets for inspection by youths who were educated in Dobbie's Loan, New City Road, or the Saltmarket. But this was only a pretext for hostilities. Like the German-made assassination at Serajevo, it was the signal for war on the snub-nosed crew who wore corduroys, peak jackets, and C.R. 'bunnets.'

'Noo, laddies,' said Maister M'Muckle on the day the order was given, 'you'll mak' them a' show their seasons. Nae nonsense frae ony o' them.'

'Ay, Maister M'Muckle,' answered Tam; 'but whit aboot thae High Schule yins? They're aye jinkin' at the gate, an' the hauf o' them ride first-cless wi' third-cless tickets.'

'Dae yer duty, Tam,' was the brief reply.

'But whit if they fecht?'

'Fecht!' ejaculated the station-master. '*Defend the honour of the Company.*'

'Richt ye are!'

That was all that Tam wanted to know. Fecht! He and Puddin' were just spoiling for a battle with the tubby-tummied Conkie M'Beetle. The advent of the four-

thirty was awaited with breathless interest. Puddin' was at one gate, Tam at the other. Conkie selected Puddin's gate, on the principle of the smaller the enemy, the less the resistance.

'All seasons ready!' shouted Puddin'.

'Seasons?' exclaimed Conkie.

'Ay.'

'What for?'

'Jist!' said Puddin', bracing himself.

'Oh!'

'Ay, oh!'

'Awa' and take a jump at yer face.'

'Show yer season,' demanded Puddin', closing the gate.

'Awa', man;' and Conkie heaved wee Puddin' aside and bolted out.

'I'll nab ye yet, ma lad.'

'Nab yer granny,' replied Conkie, putting his fingers to his nose.

'Whit a nose!' shouted Puddin'.

'Nae lip, Pollokshaws.'

'Wait till ma big brother gets ye.'

'We'll see,' said Conkie, heaving his bag up and turning home.

Puddin' returned to the booking-office to discuss a counter-attack with Tam.

'Whit are we gaun to dae wi' him?'

'Flatten him.'

'Ay; but he's ower big for me. It wud be like a bumbee hittin' a Zeppelin.'

'We'll baith tackle him.'

'When?'

'The morn.'

'A' richt; I'll haud, an' you punch.'

'That's it.'

Next day, when the train came in, unity of command was in being. The Allies were placidly awaiting the offensive. Conkie, however, was undaunted, for he had that blind courage always associated with those who are duds at maths. and useless at Greek. He walked forward as cool as a cucumber.

'Seasons,' roared Tam.

'Per-*haps*,' replied Conkie.

'There's nae per-*haps* aboot it.'

'Awa'.'

'I'll no awa'.'

'Here, cheese it.'

'I'll cheese ye. Ye havena got the wee fellah the day.'

'Get oot o' the road;' and Conkie tried to burst through.

Puddin', who had seen Yamaski Nogi-Pogi do Japanese wrestling at the Coliseum, promptly flopped down and collared the knees of the enemy. But Conkie let drive at Tam.

'Hit him in the belly-muscle,' roared Puddin'.

Tam, however, had planted an upper-cut

on Conkie's nose, from which the blood of the High School flowed freely. The red stuff drawn by a bloater-eating democrat roused the pride and passions of the High School gladiator. With a kick he sent the Nogi-Pogi Puddin' flying, and tackled Tam with a vigour that was startling. It was a clean fight. No Lancashire kicking or Cumberland hugging; no female scratching or pounding below the belt; for a public-school boy always plays the game. Conkie was a bonny fechter, *and so was Tam.* The gamin knows the Queensberry Rules, and Tam fought like a gentleman.

'Biff!'

'Bang!'

'Uh!'

'Oo!'

At the end of five minutes both were blowing hard, but neither yielded. It promised to be a long affair, until Puddin' shouted, 'Here's a bobby!' Conkie picked up his bag and ran, and Tam adjourned to the office with a black eye and a very fat nose.

The policeman passed on with a grin; he, too, had been a boy.

'Good Tam,' said Maggie, patting him on the back; for, like all the lassies, she had the primitive love of human courage.

This fight was really better than all the attentions of 'the wee slaveys' for the upsetting of Jimmy M'Cloon.

Maggie was swithering—swithering hard.

. . . . . .

Next day, 'All seasons ready,' shouted Tam.

'There it's,' said Conkie, showing his ticket.

'You're learnin'.'

'Ay. . . . Here, you're no a bad sort. Come doon to the hoose for tea the nicht. Bring the wee fellah.'

'Richt ye are.'

That night, over ham and eggs, soda-scones, and cookies, the Conkie-Tam-Puddin' Alliance was born.

There's nothing mean about the High School.

CHAPTER IX

'ONY PERSELS FOR THE HOOSE?'

THERE was no doubt of Snooker Tam's rising popularity. His smile, his eccentricities, and the extraordinary way he looked at the lady passengers from out of the corner of his eyes somehow made him a unique personality, and earned many a smile and many a tip. Life to Tam was perpetual sunshine, and his blithe morning whistle was like that of the lark. Before the residents of Kirkbride were out of their beds he was humming:

> 'Up in the mornin''s no for me,
> Up in the mornin' early.
> A wid raither be in the kitchen bed
> Than get cauld feet sae early.'

This crude parody of an old song was the signal for the servant-lassies to stir themselves, throw up the attic windows, and blow a kiss to the laddie on the platform. As the maister said, 'Tam is prompt an' attentive to his work.' When he (the station-master) shuffled out of the station-house in the morning, not a speck of dust, not a fag-end, not a hair-pin could be found. The waiting-room had a fresh

morning appearance, and in the booking-office a great fire crackled a cheery salute. By the way, booking-office fires are usually as big as 'Dixon's Blazes.' This is one of the ways by which the staff get their own back on the Company for 'wee peys and ower muckle orders.'

The postman arrived early, and it was Tam's duty to sort the letters—rather an annoying task, for he had usually to lay on Maggie's desk one or two communications from Jimmy M'Cloon. When Maggie stepped briskly in half-an-hour later she usually opened the epistles in a ceremonious way beneath Tam's nose, much to his disgust. This morning she repeated her usual tactics.

'Here, Maggie,' said Tam.

'Whit?'

'That chap o' yours'll be gettin' baldheided.'

'Whit wey?'

'He's aye sendin' ye a bit aff his hair.'

'Mind yer ain business,' she said, commencing to read.

'I'm gaun to gie your Jimmy a present.'

'Oh!'

'An awfu' nice present.'

'Mebbe.'

'Richt enough.'

'Whit?'

'A tin o' flea-pooder to pit in the envelopes. It'll stop things frae jumpin' aboot the office.'

'Ye're jealous.'

'I'm no.'

'Ye are so.'

'I'm no so—*so*'—putting his nose out. 'I ken a lot o' lassies.'

'Nae doot,' answered Maggie, burying her head in the books. This was a touchy point.

'Ay; an' you're no the only wan that gets letters. See!' he exclaimed, showing Maggie a bunch of highly coloured post-cards on which a scrawling hand had written his address. These epistles were smothered all over with x x x x x x x x x.

'Can ye no teach them to write?'

'Ach! it's no the writin'; it's the feelin's that coont.'

'I ken your feelin's, Tam. Ye hing in wi' the wee servants for jeely pieces, cookies, an' auld baps. Nae wunner folks are gaun bankrupt. Ye need a hale coo for yer denner.'

'I dae not.'

'Ye dae so.'

'*Ony persels for the hoose?*' said a wee servant-lassie with a pug-nose, looking round the corner of the door.

'Na, there's nae persels,' exclaimed Maggie, sort of sniffy.

'Nane, Jeannie,' added Tam, with a wink, and pointing his thumb over his shoulder at Maggie, who was hiding her confusion by an industrious scanning of the ledger. Jeannie departed with a grin.

When her footsteps died away, Maggie, now composed, looked up and remarked, 'That's yin o' them, I suppose.'

'Oh ay,' answered Tam, lighting a Woodbine in the style of Martin Harvey.

'She's no bonny, onywey.'

'She kisses awfu' weel, though.'

'Ach!' Maggie started to count the tickets.

'I ken whit wey ye're gaun wi' Jimmy M'Cloon.'

'Dae ye?'

'Ay.'

'Whit you ken'll no hurt onybody.'

'Jist you.'

'Hurt awa'.'

'Because he can buy ye a quarter-o'-pun' o' M'Coll's chocolates, ye'll hae naethin' to dae wi' me. It's no ma fau't that I can only gie ye tuppence worth o' sweeties. If you say that *I'm* waukin' oot the servants for jeely pieces, cookies, an' sangwidges, you're waukin' oot Jimmy M'Cloon for his chocolates.'

'I'm no!'

'Whit for, then?'

'Jimmy kens hoo to tak' aff his bunnet when he meets a lassie.'

'Oh, is that it? I'll tak' ma jaicket aff when I see ye, if that'll help ye.'

'Ye're aye funnin'.'

'*Ony persels for the hoose?*' inquired a fat dumpling of a servant with red cheeks and cheery eyes.

'No the day,' answered Maggie, a little milder, realising, no doubt, that it would not do to show too much annoyance at 'the opposition.'

'Nane, Lizzie,' added Tam.

'The missis wants ye to ca' for an egg-box the day.'

'Richt, lassie; I'll be there. When'll I come?'

'Aboot denner-time,' she replied, with a knowing look.

'I'll be there, *sherp*.'

'Ta-ta the noo.'

'Ta-ta, Lizzie!' concluded Tam, waving his hand.

Lizzie departed.

'*Anither* yin!' exclaimed Maggie, down at her ledger again.

'A bonny yin at that.'

'Heavy a wee.'

'In perts.'

'She'll need to go sideweys into the hoose.'

'That's better than yon skinnymalinks that can slip through the keyhole.'

'Dis she ken aboot the ither lassies?'

'Of coorse.'

'She must be saft.'

'Whit wey?'

'I wudna be wan o' the crood.'

'Ye're missin' a lot, then. I can get ony lassie I like.'

'Except me.' Maggie put up her nose high.

'*Ony persels for the hoose?*' inquired a black-haired, black-eyed damsel, a real strapping lass of sixteen.

'Na,' rapped out Maggie.

'No the day, Bessie,' added Tam; 'but come back in the efternin.'

'Whit time?'

'Aboot twa o'clock.'

'A' richt. Ta-ta.'

'Ta-ta the noo.'

'I'll tell the maister,' said Maggie, pointing her finger at him.

'Whit aboot?'

'Askin' that lassie to ca' when I'm oot an' the maister's at his denner.'

'But Bessie aye ca's when ye're oot.'

'I *jist* thocht that.'

'I canna stop *you* frae gaun wi' Jimmy M'Cloon, so *you* canna stop me frae speakin'

to Bessie when ye're oot. If you tell on *me*, I'll tell on *you*. See!'

'Whit are ye gaun to tell aboot?' she demanded.

'You.'

'Me?'

'Ay.'

'Tell on.'

'I'll tell the maister aboot you pittin' pooder on yer nose an' red stuff on yer mooth.'

'I wis jist tryin' it. I fun' it in the waitin'-room,' explained Maggie nervously.

'But ye're no supposed to pit pooder on yer nose when ye're on the railway.'

'Whit wey?'

'To stop the auld men, the meenisters, an' the sodgers frae killin' time at the bookin'-office windie. The maister says ye're to be plain Jean and nae nonsense. It's only the lassies at Singer's an' Georgetoon that can mak' a guid job o' pooder, onywey. Some lassies slap it on like pittin' floor into a puddin'.'

'Ye seem to ken a' aboot it.'

'*Ony persels for de hoose?*' inquired a Belgian maid who had acquired her English from the Scots. She was a sparkling-eyed witch, and of course, like all Belgians, had a dab of flour on her nose and red ochre on her lips.

'Nae persels,' answered Maggie.

'No the day, Josefeeny,' added Tam with a wink.

'What for you winket at me always?'

'Jist for fun.'

'You naughtee laddees. I give it you kees when you come doon de hoose. Ta-ta.'

'Ma conscience!' declared Tam, as he watched her go. 'That's the goods.'

'Thae Belgians are a bad lot,' declared Maggie, counting the tickets again, for this 'persel' business was thoroughly rousing the green-eyed monster.

'Whiles, Maggie; whiles.'

'Ye're learnin' oot here.'

'It's in the faimily. Ma uncle's in the Proodenshul. They ken a lot.'

'It's no the wey to keep in wi' me, then.'

'Is it no?'

'Na.'

'But there's naebody wantin' to keep in wi' ye. I've got lots o' lassies. An' you've got Jimmy M'Cloon.'

'Hiv I?'

'Ay.'

'Jimmy's no everything to me,' she answered tearfully.

'Oh, that's news.' Tam opened his eyes.

'But you're no encouragin'.'

'Whit wey?'

'Jist!'

'Tell us.'

There was silence for a minute. Maggie was wondering whether she would make the grand confession that Tam was the apple of her eye. At the moment she felt like that, for 'the opposition' of the 'persel brigade' had sapped the cause of Jimmy M'Cloon. Alas! as she was about to announce that Tam was her own true love, the door opened for the fifth time, and a buxom, bonny lass, with golden hair and bonny blue eyes, inquired. '*Ony persels for the hoose?*'

'Ay,' said Tam.

'Whaur?'

'Here,' he said, pointing to himself.

'You?'

'Ay. I'm *your* persel, Janet,' he concluded, taking Janet by the arm and escorting her in a jaunty way from the booking-office to the back-door of a convenient mansion.

Poor Maggie! She buried her head in the books and wished to Heaven she had never met Jimmy M'Cloon.

CHAPTER X.

RAILWAY NATIONALISATION—THE MAISTER'S DREAM.

POLITICS seldom disturbed Maister M'Muckle, but an election always gave him a little fun. He liked to hear the candidates. At this election he had a great choice. For example, there was Mr Caw Canny of the People's Party. He had a great programme—six hours a day, a long lie in the morning, no rents, free beer, and big pays. A most alluring ticket, designed to magnetise those who dabbled in More's *Utopia* or went to bed with Karl Marx. Mr Bradlaugh Gladstoan voiced the claims of the Old and Bold—the big loaf, frozen beef at sixpence a pound, a pig in every back-garden, free tattie-plots, and a washin'-hoose key for every woman who liked to bile the man's semmits and bairns' hippins in peace without all those worries about whose turn it was for the immortal bit of iron. This was a most alluring bait for those who lived on stairheads. But the greatest artist of all was the Right Honourable Jeremiah Dooemdown, the representative

of the Amalgamated Autodemocrats, who entered upon the scene with a 'ticket' on his chest announcing:

I AM IT.
VOTE FOR *ME*
OR *YOU* ARE
DAMNED.

Now, Jerry was a very smart fellow. He had started off in life in a style calculated to impress the nation with his high moral elevation—that is, as an orator for 'leemonade' and the wrecker of 'hauf-mutchkins.' From youth he had preached the urgent need of sending hobble skirts and bell-mouthed trousers to Kaffir belles and Jack Johnsons; as a colporteur he had bigger sales of John Bunyan and Thomas à Kempis than any other man alive; while his tenor voice had been awarded a silver medal for a reading of that soul-stirring anthem, 'Glory for me.' This, as you know, is 'the goods' for catching the Nonconformist vote and the attendance of *nice old ladies* at the meetings. He was also assured of the licensed vote, owing to the manager of his party being a manufacturer of alcoholic kola and aqua

pura toddy. The old nobility adorned his platforms on the understanding that he promised *everything* and did *nothing;* while lyddite kings followed suit in the belief that he would annihilate the Excess Profits Act, and pass a Bill compelling general servants, office-boys, and railway porters to address them as All-Highest and take off their 'bunnets' when they whizzed past in a Ford. He even held out democratic carrots for the asses and the lassies who attended his evening classes. Nationalisation of everything, from morning rolls and skim-milk to fish and chips and railways. And the dear ladies were to be given the rights of man, a chubb-key, and no chaperons when going home from the House of Commons at 2 A.M. In short, there was to be a new Heaven and a new Earth. Evan-Evans from Slangothlen had *said* so, and Baron von Mullner had *ordered* it. The Old Order was no more. Dukes were going to do the Tango with their housemaids, capitalists were out for debits, and a certain statesman had decided to run ham-and-egg teas twice daily, and three times on Saturday, for all who endorsed his ticket. This was impressive, and, like *Charley's Aunt*, it caught on. Every newspaper backed it, for Lord Makemee-a-Dook,

the advertising-manager of the Auto-democrats, had taken over the Press, and promised every reporter who lost the train for opposition meetings that new and attractive silver medal officially known as the Ho Bee Hee. Add to all this the tear-compelling, soul-stirring '*Vote for me-e-ee,*' and it will be imagined how this marvellous politician stunned the voluble disciples of Caw Canny and Bradlaugh Gladstoan. Even Maister M'Muckle, who, in the interests of the Company, had always been a neutral, sat spell-bound, almost enchanted. When Jeremiah talked straight at him about nationalisation of railways, and showed how the Auto-democrats would create fifty thousand one-thousand-pound officials and rig station-masters out in gold braid and cavalry sabres, the maister audibly muttered, 'Oh man! Oh man!' But when the oration ended and the spell was broken, he was seen to lift his old Caley bonnet and go out muttering, 'Guid Goad! Guid Goad!'

All this talk about nationalisation disturbed the maister's serenity. He was distinctly conservative, and hated new-fangled things. And, like many more who have reached threescore years, he dreaded the thought. It would mean

an upheaval; an upheaval means change. The maister desired no change. He wanted to finish his service as he had begun, as 'a servant o' the Company.' That was his last thought as he crept into the big kitchen bed and adjusted his nightcap. He snuggled down into the pillows, well pleased with the lot God had given him, and before falling into the arms of Morpheus was heard to mumble, 'Nationalisation! Guid Goad!'

Now, it is well known that if man falls asleep after an exciting discussion or entertainment, he is likely to dream—dream hard and long. This was the fate of Maister M'Muckle. The meeting was repeated, and he saw the squirrel-like Jeremiah Dooemdown strutting up and down the platform, pouring forth all his eloquence on Nationalisation. The dream proceeded, with a lot of blurs and vagaries, as dreams usually do; but one thing stood out clear—that was the victory of Jeremiah at the polls. The victory roused the dreamer to greater attention. Gradually a sort of comedy on Nationalisation developed. As Jeremiah predicted, Nationalisation had to come. Trades Unions demanded it; politicians with poor relatives shouted for it; and Baron von Mullner endorsed these demands on

the grounds of political strategy, as well as the urgent need of a sort of a school for the training of impecunious Oxford bloods in practical administration, with a view to becoming Imperialistic Rajahs at Hookapoona, Currydore, and Allahabalmy. Naturally Evan-Evans took it up. Free travelling would permit all the Welsh glee choirs and Dorcas Societies to come to London in stove-pipe hats and play on their harps in Browning Street:

> Hark the herald angels sing,
> Glory to our new-born King, &c. &c.

There were preliminaries to the Bill, of course. Merick Blediss, the Minister in charge, was too business-like to ladle out the alluring tales with which the skilled politicians clothe all their Bills, from free week-ends to 'ninepence for fourpence.' He was sent to the country, and ordered by Shon Chuckan to read *The Arabian Knights*, Omar Khayyam, Jules Verne, Louis de Rougemont, and the *The Land Tales* of Evan-Evans, delivered to the blind crofters of Sutherland and the Scottish Society for the Maintenance of Poor Lawyers in Parliament and in Heaven. Merick, being an obliging chap, did so, and returned to a House packed with eager listeners, each man with a missive in his pocket from the

Chief Whip, saying, 'Vote for this Bill or I shall cut off your expenses.' The Press Gallery was expectant for the Ho Bee Hee, which had been passed round in silver salvers in their restaurant, and two thousand cameras and bioscopes were charged for action in the Distinguished Strangers' Galleries.

Lord Makemee-a-Dook sat in the Peers' Gallery with a wireless instrument in his pocket. This had connections to Evan-Evans, the Press Gallery, and an exclusive aerial to Diana and the other lady reporters of *The Daily Scoops*. All the representatives of opposition newspapers had been doped at dinner, and each man's hand was now controlled by a delicate instrument, which caused him to write puff pars. This instrument was invented and worked by Sir Ghilly Tartanland, who had learnt much by chewing cigars in Fleet Street. In the lobbies, hundreds of railway directors sat with brief-bags on their knees and a revolver in their pockets. If all went well, the bags were to carry off the golden shekels; but if the price was cut by the Caw Canny opposition, they intended to die in the lobbies of the House. Outside of the House two million railway shareholders were assembled, but were kept well in hand by ten divisions of

Guards, who lay fully accoutred behind breastworks of broken bottles and parapets studded with tacks and needles. The shareholders appeared to be armed with sleepers, and many banners floated in the breeze. The dreamer saw distinctly three flags with the following inscriptions: '*Fair Do for "The Caley;"*' '*A Guid Price for "The Soo'-West;"*' '*You'll never cheat the Auld N.B.*'

These shareholders were under the command of Donald O'Donald, who was dressed in a corned-beef kilt, a swallow-tail coat, and a tartan lum-hat. His army was voluble, at times threatening, but in the main fairly orderly. In any case, Baron von Mullner's rubber-heeled agents commanded all the shareholder platoons, so that nothing very serious could happen. The baron, by the way, was perfectly cool. He was eating biltong and calmly counting his Matoppo dividends in the Clock Tower. Such was the atmosphere when Merick Blediss, fresh from the land of Fairy Tales, rose up to introduce the Bill.

The brave, good Merick said: 'As a mere apprentice in the world of politics, I crave the indulgence of this august assembly.' This sop to the Old Guard was relished like crême de menthe, and all settled down to hear his story. 'Some-

how I feel my task is an easy one. The Press is unanimous. (Makemee-a-Dook grinned.) Public opinion is apparently ripe; more important, the opposition are practically agreed. This is indeed gratifying to the Government, for the measure is essential in the interests of defence, economy, national peace.'

'And votes,' interjected Harry Waugh.

The interjection by the member for Bannockburn rather upset the Minister, but the Sergeant-at-Arms, by gripping the handle of his Brummagem sword, silenced the objector, and Merick proceeded. 'We propose to pay five thousand millions to the railway companies.'

'Per-haps,' shouted the rude Ettrick Shepherd.

'And this sum the Government will raise by the commercial exploitation of paraffin-oil in the Isle of Man, diamonds in the Grampians, and a series of boarding-houses, which we propose to erect along the old Front Line, for the benefit of tourists who desire to see how *this* Government won the war. (Terrific cheering.)

'Again, the railways afford a source of revenue which, in my opinion, can be double what it yields to-day. For example, great economies are to be effected. Instead of a hundred factories for building

engines and wagons, it is the intention of the Government to concentrate all of these works at Loch Doon.'

'Hellp!' roared a reporter of the *Ayrshire Post* in the Press Gallery. He was ejected.

'At this factory we shall erect patent machinery capable of eating ten thousand tons of metal and forty thousand tons of wood per hour, and throwing out engines and wagons in standardised parts in the same rapid manner as we turned out the standard ships.'

'Question!' roared Bunsyman.

'We also intend that railway tickets shall play a more useful part. These tickets will be made of thicker material than at present. On the backs we shall print dominoes. All used tickets will be made up into domino sets, and sold to the public. This invention will also be of use to weary travellers who use the Highland or the Chatham and Dover Railway. (Cheers.) Every train will carry a refreshment-bar. (Hurrahs.) There will be third-class sleepers for the use of first-class passengers.' ('Oh!') 'All voters who live on suburban railways will be provided with a hot sandwich daily, and at all stations a nursery will be established for the internment of children whose mothers desire to go to the refreshment-room, or into the

city to hear a member of the Government on the question of "Unity."'

'Dear me!' said Bringle.

'The Government intend to heighten railway-trucks to three times their present height, and thus ease the great pressure on the goods departments.'

'What about the tunnels?' roared a practical railway M.P.

'The tunnels will be heightened by a new process recently invented in the U.S.A. This is a liquid rubber which is forced out at high pressure into the keystones and arches. In half-an-hour the whole mass becomes pliable; then, by the use of hydraulic pincers, the tunnel is raised to the height required without all those worries of demolition and reconstruction. I may add that the *Daily Tale* has made a practical test of this invention on one of the arches underneath the Standard Bread Company. It was so successful that the editor has *ordered* the Government to adopt it. As I have indicated, we shall carry out his request.'

'Ha, ha!' laughed Wattumley.

'It may be necessary to raise the fares.'

'Never!'

'No!'

'Shame!' shouted the members.

'I simply said it may be necessary, but

in view of the opposition I at once withdraw the suggestion.

'Now, with regard to the staff, we shall take over and maintain all men at present serving on the railways, but it is likely that we may add a few thousand subscribers of *The Morning Post* for the purpose of reorganisation. The uniforms will be changed. Station-masters will be dressed in sky-blue faced with gold braid, and wear a Nelson hat. Cavalry sabres will be issued as promised by Mr Jeremiah Dooemdown at the election. Ticket-collectors, especially the Flying Squad, will wear an invisible gray to enable them to carry out their duties more efficiently. And all railway porters are to be clad in red trousers and white Eton jackets for the purpose of economy. All salaries will be doubled. (Loud Labour cheers.)

'And now I come to the final and perhaps the most interesting part. All M.P.'s will travel free. (Terrific cheering.) Also their families. (More cheering.) Free luncheons will be provided. (Loud hurrahs.) And after one session in the House of Commons each member will be made the recipient of a free pass for life. I therefore hope that the House will pass this historic and most useful measure.'

'Agreed.' . . . 'Agreed.' . . . 'Agreed.'

As Merick sat down Evan-Evans gave him a Slangothlen wink and the offer of a peerage.

The maister's dream snapped.

It was the alarm-clock that did it, and the goodwife was shaking him hard.

'What's up, woman? What's up?'

'It's six o'clock, man.'

'Och, I wis in the Hoose o' Commons

'The Hoose o' Commons?' she inquired.

'Ay—are we no nationalised yet?'

'Na! na!'

'An' I'm still wi' the Caley?'

'Ay, ay. Come awa', noo.'

The maister, now thoroughly aroused, tumbled out of his bed, mumbling, 'Thank Goad! . . . Thank Goad!'

CHAPTER XI.

CONKIE'S 'AT HOME.'

CONKIE M'BEETLE was now a regular 'shower' of his season ticket, also a frequent visitor to the booking-office. To sit at the familiar fireside was a great honour, so Conkie was what the crowd call 'well in.' He thoroughly enjoyed his cracks with the boys, as well as the sallies of Maggie; indeed, Tam began to suspect it was Maggie he came to see, till that bright young lady whispered in his ear that she really 'didna like boys wi' big noses an' fat legs.' This eased his mind, and many a jolly rag occurred between-trains. They discussed everything from Rugger to 'form.'

'Hoo d'ye weer a wee bunnet like that?' Tam asked Conkie one day.

'That's the High School cap.'

'Swank!' piped Puddin'.

'Ay,' nodded Maggie.

'It's no swank; it's cloth,' explained Conkie artlessly.

'Wha are ye kiddin'? queried Tam. 'You chaps frae "The High" think ye're toffs; but ye're no toffs at a'. See!'

'Oh!'

'Ay, "oh!" I ken a wee chap wha's faither sells fish an' chips. He's at the High School. D' ye mean to tell me he's a toff? Besides, whit aboot Rab Gleg? His faither keeps a whisky-shop. Is he a toff?'

'We'll mebbe mak' him into yin efter bein' at "The High."'

'Nae fear! "The High" is for them that gets on; the Academy is whaur the toffs are. I ken,' was the decisive retort of Tam.

To Conkie the mention of 'the Academy' was like a red rag to a bull, for there is a standing feud between these schools; not a feud between snobs, but one really based on Rugger results.

'Ye're a blether. I've nae time for this "toff" rot, but we can knock spots off the Academy ony day.'

'Mebbe,' ejaculated Puddin', always ready to put fire into an argument.

'What d' ye ken aboot it?' shouted the angry Conkie, turning towards Puddin', who was perched up on the counter.

'Listen, ma lad,' replied the artful Puddin', picking up *The Rugger News*, and commencing to read: '"The match between the High School and the Academy, which took place on Saturday afternoon, was one of the sternest games in the history

of Rugby. Both sides were well matched, and at first it was difficult to sense the likely winners. But a magnificent break through by the Academy forwards soon placed 'The High' on the defensive, and the latter had literally to fight for their existence. It was a severe test, with evidence of spirit; but despite the magnificent defence of Conkie M'Beetle and his courageous friends, the Academy won the day. We tender our sympathy to the gallant Conkie, whose nose was severely bruised, and whose new shirt was literally torn off his back. No doubt the hearty meal between victors and vanquished at the end of the game took the salt out of the sores of the wounded. We hope that 'The High' will come again. Meantime, we suggest a tightening up of 'The High's' forward line."'

'There, ma lad,' concluded Puddin', coolly folding up the paper; 'pit that in yer pipe an' smoke it.'

'Here, Puddin', it's facts you need. Look at that!' Conkie handed over the results of former seasons, during which 'The High' was almost consistently victorious and remarkably steady.

'No bad,' mumbled Puddin', realising he was up against it.

'It's jolly good! The Academy gets a

match noo and again, but for steady, good Rugger, "The High" has it every time. You ken naethin' aboot it, Puddin'.'

'He kens Soccer, onywey,' remarked Tam.

'Ach, Soccer! That's a Bolshevik's gem. A wee lassie can play Soccer. If ye nudge or glower at yer man in Soccer, it's "a foul," a penalty kick, an' a' that nonsense. The scrum's the thing for makin' men. The best officers are Rugger players.'

'Mebbe! But the best privates are Soccer players. Look at a' the D.C.M.'s,' ventured Puddin'.

'What aboot the Rugger V.C.'s and D.S.O.'s., eh?' replied Conkie.

'Ach! it's an argument ye're efter,' said Tam.

'You started it, talkin' aboot toffs an' Rugger.'

'It wisna me! It wis that wee chocolate-coloured bunnet o' yours. Whit's the guid o' a thing like that on a wet or a cauld day?'

'It's no the bunnet, Tam; it's what's underneath it.'

'Hellp!' roared Puddin'.

'What are ye hellupin' at?'

'There's no much in your heid. I could bate ye at decimals and fractions.'

'Per-haps! But what aboot Greek?'

'Greek! That's a mug's gem. Greek 'll no buy a black puddin' or get a job on the railway.'

'Mebbe no; but this bunnet 'll help me into a job wi' ma jaicket on. Ye're mebbe strong in the back, Puddin', but ye're saft in the heid.'

'Cheese it, Conkie! I'm no sae very saft when I can mak' ye show yer season.'

'I didna want a funeral.'

'Wha's funeral?'

'Yours!'

'Yours tae,' interjected Tam.

'Can you boys no talk sense?' interrupted Maggie. 'A' ye hiv got in yer heids is fitba' an' fightin'. Ye scunner me.'

'You're a lassie! Whit dae you ken?' inquired Tam.

'Lots.'

'Oh!'

'Ay, "oh!"'

'"Ay, oh!" an' sweeties is a' you got at the schule.'

'An' sense.'

'Whit sort o' sense?'

'Common-sense,' an'—*ceevility*.'

'Michty me!' exclaimed Puddin', blowing a volume of smoke out of a 'gasper.'

'Awa' wi' yer "Michty me!" to Pollokshaws. You've had nae education at a'. Ye wipe yer nose wi' yer bunnet, and eat

yer ham wi' yer fingers. Ye mebbe ken aboot fitba', but ye canna eat an orange withoot splashin' yer face. The High Schule wud teach you a lot.'

'That's right, Maggie; that's right!' shouted Conkie.

'Oh ay. Pile it on to the wee fellah; but it's a peety you're no a man, Maggie.'

'Whit wey?'

'I wud gie ye a skelp on the lug.'

'Ye couldna skelp a bumbee off a jeely-pot. Ye're a wee, fat barbarian. Ach! I canna be bothered wi' ye,' she concluded, putting on her hat, and sallying out for tea.

'That's like a lassie—scratch and rin awa',' mumbled Puddin' as the door *banged!*

'She's the "boy" for you, Puddin',' remarked Tam.

'Ach! weemin canna argue. Ye've jist to leave them alane an' let them scratch awa'. There should be nae weemin in the world at a'.'

'But you wudna be here, then,' Conkie reminded him.

'Wud I no? Whit aboot Adam? He had nae faither or mither, an' he had a fine time o' it, till a wumin cam' an' started tae blether in his lug. If there wis nae weemin, I expect we'd get born

up in coco-nut trees. I wud suner be a coco-nut than a mairrit man.'

'Ye've got a heid like a coco-nut, onywey,' suggested Tam.

'An' yours is like the Kaiser's.'

'Whit's the difference?'

'There's somethin' in ma coco-nut, but there's naethin' in the Kaiser's or *yours*. Red-heided boys and Irish dugs hiv nae intelligence. Ask the Clincher!'

'Nane o' yer lip.'

'Nane o' yours.'

'Here, Puddin'; there's a fag,' said Conkie, breaking up the threatened combat. Tam also received one. Lighting up, they puffed away, solemnly discussing everything from the King's bounty for triplets to the latest style of fresh-air stockings as worn by the young ladies of the suburb. When the conversation lacked ginger, Puddin' maliciously stirred it in; but they ended up cheerfully enough, and at the conclusion of the sitting were agreeably surprised to hear that Conkie's mother would be delighted to have them at a little 'At Home' for the youth of the district. 'See and turn up in time, boys,' were Conkie's last words.

'Oh ay. We're ave in time for ham teas an' conversassionees. Guid-nicht, Conkie.'

'Good-night.'

. . . . . .

'Tam,' said Puddin' later in the evening.

'Whit?'

'D'ye ken whit an "At Hame" means?'

'I'm no shair. I think it jist means "At Hame," but mebbe it's a sort o' mix up between a knife-an'-fork tea an' a cup in yer haun'. Thae toffs hiv funny ideas; but nae doot it'll be a guid affair.'

'Ay! I think I'll weer ma new rubber dicky an' red-strippet collar, eh?'

'Awa, man! Ye canna weer a rubber dicky at a tea-perty. They'll think ye're a Bolshie. Get the len' o' yer faither's white shirt.'

'The tail's oot o' it.'

'They'll no miss it, unless ye burst yer breeks; but there's nae fear o' that. They're like balloons at the back. Of course, they're handy tae.'

'Whit for?'

'If ye tie a string roon' the leg o' yer breeks, ye can stuff awa' the spare cookies an' oranges.'

'Whit door dae we go in by—the front or the back?'

'The front yin, *of course*. This is a social, no railway business. We're toffs for the nicht.'

'I'm no shair aboot it,' said Puddin', scratching his head. . . . 'Whit d'ye say when ye get inside?'

'Jist shuv yer haun' oot an' say, "I hope ye're weel, Mrs M'Beetle, as it leaves me at present." An' mind an' no mak' a fule o' yersel'. Show that ye're a gentleman; dinna blaw yer tea, nor saucer it; jist waft it wi' yer bunnet.'

'Here! wha are ye kiddin'?'

'I'm no kiddin'; but you chaps frae Pollokshaws are no ceevilised. Maggie says ye canna eat an orange withoot splashin' yer face. That'll no dae at Mrs M'Beetle's.'

'No sae much o' yer lip aboot Pollokshaws. But here, whaur did ye learn a' this?'

'I bocht yin o' Leng's penny books entitled *Mainners for Toffs, an' what to dae at Soirees, Dances, and Conversassionees.*'

'Keep yer feet oot o' the tureens, then; an' dinna start sniffin' the hot pies an' sausages,' suggested Puddin'.

'I'll watch that. If ye get stuck, jist say, "Excuse me," an' rin oot an' hae a look at ma penny book. That'll stop ye frae shuvin' yer knife doun yer thrapple an' wipin' yer nose wi' the sleeve o' yer jaicket.'

'Cheese it!'

'Whit wey?'

'I'm no sae green as I'm cabbage-lookin'.'

'Mebbe.'

'There's *nae* mebbe aboot it.'

'Keep yer hair on. I wis only jokin'.'

'Ye canna tak' a rise oot o' Pollokshaws, onywey.'

'Pollokshaws?'

'Ay, Pollokshaws.'

'That's whaur they bile semmits in the fryin'-pan, an' eat roast-beef aff the *Evenin' Times*. I ken a' yer tricks.'

'A' richt, Snooker Tam. We'll see wha's the best at the perty.'

'Ay, ay; awa' hame an' scrub yer rubber dicky.'

'Scrub yer granny!' roared Puddin', going out to light the lamps.

. . . . . .

If Mrs M'Beetle was busy and thorough in her preparations for the young people's party, so were the railway boys. Tam scrubbed his face with a nail-brush, while Puddin' used up a whole cake of erasmic to give a pleasant aroma to the proceedings. And both the boys had been picking up hints on how to do things. When the hour came for their departure the excitement was high. Puddin's collar was choking him, while Tam's skin-tight

Sunday breeks were rather uncomfortable. It was alleged that he had put them on with a shoe-horn. Still, they made a brave show, and their appearance was much enhanced by a great big bunch of sweet-william stuck in the lapel of the jacket.

'Ta-ta, boys,' said Maggie.

'Ta-ta.'

Mrs M'Beetle, all smiles, met them at the door. She was a real good soul, with no side, and loved all boys, irrespective of their social pedigrees. She was also secretly glad that Tam and Puddin' had helped to tame her own loving, but harum-scarum, son.

'How d' ye do, Tam?' she said, shaking hands.

'Fine, Mrs M'Beetle. Are ye a' weel?'

'Oh yes, very well.'

'Ah, here's Puddin'!' putting out her hand again.

'Quite well, thank ye for askin',' mumbled Puddin', who had got the greeting from another source.

'In there, boys, and take off your coats,' said the hostess, showing them the cloak-room, and smiling inwardly at their quaint mannerisms. As Tam was taking off his coat he whispered in Puddin's ear, 'That 's no in the book.'

'Whit?'

'"Quite well, thank ye for askin'."'

'Awa' an' bile yer heid!'

'Come on now, boys—this way;' and Mrs M'Beetle led them towards the door of a room from which a loud murmur of voices issued forth. She opened it. Lo and behold, there was a gathering of the prettiest flappers and nicest boys of the suburb!

'Hello, Tam!' . . . 'Hello, Puddin'!' shouted Conkie.

'Hello!' mumbled the now terribly abashed heroes. Tam's book went out of his head in a flash, but he had sufficient presence of mind to whisper, 'Here, Conkie, hiv we to go roon' a' thae lassies? If so, I'm gaun to scoot. I'm no up to the business.'

'No! no! never mind them. They're ower busy admirin' themselves. You'll get in wi' them all right when the American Post starts.'

'Whit's that?'

'High jinks at the back o' the door.'

'Jings! They're worth kissin', are they no?' said Tam, keeking round at the circle of plump and pretty damsels.

'You bet; an' they're a' efter you. I heard them talkin' aboot you.'

'That's no bad.'

'Camouflage his braith, then,' suggested

Puddin', who was recovering, and beginning to feel he had been born in the purple.

'Sit here, boys; the music's starting,' said Mrs M'Beetle.

They all sat on a big, comfy sofa, chewing walnuts and candies, while a pretty girl gave a beautiful rendering of Christina Rossetti's 'Birthday.' She had a charming voice, and these words bewitched even the youngest and the most unthinking:

'My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickest fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

'Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.'

'That's awfu' nice,' ventured Tam.

'She's awfu' bonny! Wha is she in love wi'? inquired Puddin'.

'Me,' said Conkie.

'Hoo did ye manage to catch such a bonny lassie?'

'A Rugger lad always gets the pick o' the bunch,' he replied.

'Pit me doon for Rugger. Nae mair Soccer for me,' concluded Puddin'.

'Now, Tam, it's your turn,' suggested the hostess, coming over. 'Just give us that recitation of yours. The girls are dying to hear it.'

'I'll try, Mrs M'Beetle,' he said, rising bashfully, and coming forward. The smiles of welcome in the young ladies' faces made him more at ease. With serio-comic gestures, he recited:

'Tell you the tale of the line, sir,
Where the sleepers sleep on the track,
And the cinders that fall from the engines
Burn the corns of Paddy and Mac.
'Twas at night . . . when the moon was low, sir,
When shadows seem devils o' night,
That I saw a bomb on a sleeper,
And close to the bomb—a light.

'My hair bristled up like a hog's, sir,
My shirt stuck close to my back,
My knees they rattled like crackers,
And teeth went crunchety crack;
But I knew that delay meant death, sir,
To the grumphies' train on the line,
So I stamped out a burning fag, sir,
And threw a *turnip bomb*—to the swine.'

This caused peals of laughter, especially by its rendering, for to look at Tam during any of his antics was enough to cause one to break out into laughter. After he had taken his seat, the parlour games commenced. Many games were called for, but the girls *insisted* on 'American Post.' They had a ploy on, as you shall see. Wee Betty Green and Clara M'Kenzie were the leaders. The first to go out was Betty. She knocked at the door, and on entering declared, 'A letter for Snooker Tam.'

'How many stamps?' asked the president.

'Twenty-five.'

'Go for your letter, Tam,' commanded the presiding authority.

'I hiv got nae stamps,' he said innocently.

'You'll get them behind the door.'

'Here, Conkie, whit's this gem?' he whispered.

'Twenty-five kisses, Tam.'

'Jings, I'm off!' and he was out of the door like a shot. A great noise was heard, something like cheep . . . cheep . . . cheep, twenty-five cheeps in all. Tam and Betty then returned—*all smiles.* The game went on, till Clara M'Kenzie came. She announced a letter for Puddin' Brown—fifty stamps to pay.

'Go on, the lucky lad,' shouted Conkie.

Puddin' shuffled through the door, red as a peacock. He didn't know how to begin, but Clara put out her lips in such a pretty, tempting way that he tumbled to the delights of Omar Khayyam like a fish taking to the water. Fifty! Ye gods! He wished for a hundred! When he returned he was as dashing as Brigadier Gerard, and as jaunty as Bailie Nicol Jarvie.

'Musical Chairs' was the next order, and right merrily they went round and round to:

'A-hunting we will go,
A-hunting we will go.
We 'll catch a fox,
And put him in a box,
And never let him go—o.'

This game entirely banished the last vestiges of reserve on the part of Tam and Puddin', and they capered round as if playing in the booking-office. The wise hostess was glad to note their enjoyment, for she was a big-hearted woman, possessed of the belief that if the rich would now and again share their joys with the poor, there would be less misery, less bitterness, and a mutual understanding. Only the snob will disagree.

An amusing incident occurred during the

'Spinning of the Plate.' Clara M'Kenzie called Puddin'. He dashed manfully out, but his iron heel-plate slipped on the polished floor, and he slid right across the room into the fireplace. *Something cracked.* He got up all smiles, but unusually troubled. Reaching the couch where Conkie and Tam were sitting, he whispered, 'Here, Conkie, can I rin oot for a meenit?'

'Ay! What 's up?'

'The back buttons are aff ma troosers. Hae ye a safety-pin?'

'Sure—come on.'

They rose up, and as they went out Tam whispered, 'That 's no in the book, Puddin'.'

'Awa', an' chow yer book! I 'm gettin' on fine withoot it;' and he sailed out to get 'a safety' linked to his braces.

Meantime the mischievous Clara had picked up the buttons, and these were used during the game of 'Forfeits.'

'Who is the owner of these pretty things?' asked Clara, with the devil in her eye.

'Puddin',' shouted Tam.

'What shall he do?' she next inquired of the blindfolded lady.

'Kiss the flowers of the carpet.'

Every girl in the room immediately became 'a flower' on the carpet, and wee Puddin' had to kiss them all to get his

precious buttons back. But Puddin' had his revenge on Tam. When asked to give a song, he sang a different rendering of 'Duncan Gray.'

'Snooker Tam cam' here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe Yule-night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Looked asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Snooker stand abeigh,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

'Snooker fleeched an' Snooker prayed;
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig;
Snooker sighed baith oot and in,
Grat his e'en baith bleer't and blin'.
Spak' o' lowpin' ower a linn.

'Time and Chance are but a tide;
Slighted love is sair to bide:
"Shall I, like a fool," quoth he,
"For a naughty hizzie dee?
She may gae to—France for me!"

'How it comes let doctors tell;
Meg grew sick as he grew hale;
Something in her bosom wrings;
For relief a sigh she brings;
And oh! her e'en, they spak' sic things!

'Snooker was a lad o' grace;
Maggie's was a piteous case;

Snooker couldna be her death,
Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath ;
Noo they 're crouse an' canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.'

This song was the hit of the evening, for all knew of Tam's love affair. They chanted the last verse over with vigour, making Tam blush like a red, red rose. When Puddin' sat down he nodded to Tam, saying, '*That's no in the book, eh ?*'

This ended the amusements, and all went out to tea. Tam took Betty, and Puddin' escorted Clara ; while Conkie, as captain of the Rugger team, claimed the belle of the evening. It was a great feast —pies, tarts, trifle, jellies, apples, oranges, and nuts. And *crackers*. The boys *loved* the crackers. Tam 'pulled' with Betty for a clown's 'bunnet' and a little slip of paper :

'You love me and I 'll love you.'

And Puddin' secured from Clara a *chef's* cap and an endearing message, which ran :

'Meet me in the moonlight, Tommy darling.'

These boys had had many a merry evening in their time, but none so jolly,

so kind, and free as this. This convinced Tam that there was nothing mean about the Kirkbride folk; indeed, they were now above all others in hospitality. And didn't his heart warm to Conkie and his generous-hearted mother! He just loved them. 'The toffs,' he mused, 'are no sae "toffy" efter a', while the young yins are fu' o' fun an' kindness.' Oh, it was a great party, the best he had ever attended, and right joyfully he, Puddin', and all sang:

'Will ye no' come back again,
Will ye no' come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be;
Will ye no' come back again?

'Three cheers for Conkie and Mrs M'Beetle!' shouted Tam.

'Hip, hip! Hooray!
Hip, hip! Hooray!
Hip, hip! Hooray!'

Didn't they deserve them?

CHAPTER XII.

SOOKIN' THE SAUSAGES.

EVER since Adam ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden there has been a police force. From a body originally dressed in leaves and armed with the trunk of a bamboo-tree, the force has progressed to a well-ordered army with umbrella-proof top-hats and a baton hidden in the leg o' the breeks. So useful has this organisation become to civilised communities that it has been extended to all great commercial undertakings, such as the railways. Every company has its police force, even the Cathcart Circle. The exact origin of the railway police and detective force is obscure. But there is evidence pointing to the fact that owing to modern Adams helping themselves to strawberries, Loch Fyne herrings, finnan haddies, and soda-scones, it was found necessary to create a protective body. Not too popular with the boys on the line, but very necessary to keep milk-drinkers, whisky-sookers, and egg-stealers in order. The methods of the police vary, but are generally successful. Every

member has the scent of a bloodhound; indeed, they are so smart that one of their famous detectives, called 'Sheet Lightning,' slipped his hand under a respected citizen's waistcoat one day and discovered a missing button which had been taken from one of the carriage cushions. The flabbergasted gentleman explained that he was in an awkward predicament in the morning, and had only borrowed the button to hold up his lower garments.

'Weel, tak' ma advice, an' dinna try to haud yer breeks up wi' railway property again.'

This little incident will at once display the ingenuity and resource of 'Sheet Lightning.' He was the terror of the line. He had eyes that could see through the tunnels and round the bends from 'Glesca' to Cathcart. Whenever a boy-porter slunk into the department labelled 'Gentlemen' for three puffs at somebody's discarded fag-end, 'Sheet Lightning' somehow fell off the top of the cisterns or appeared to come through the penny-in-the-slot machine. Talk about Fouché, the master-spy of Napoleon! He wasn't in it.

In appearance 'Sheet Lightning' was like a razor, thin side on. His motions

were jerkity, jerkity, flittity, flumpity, revealing a sort of compressed electric temperament which enabled him to leap on to the buffers of an express train and catch a God-fearing guard sampling Johnnie Walker or cutting a couple of links off Annacker's sausages preparatory to frying them over his lamp. At sixty miles an hour he could leap from carriage to carriage till he reached the head of the train, and hiding himself behind one of the small round ventilators (about two inches high and three inches in circumference), he could catch a bearded engine-driver playing banker or making out a football 'koopaun,' instead of looking out for dead cows and dead men on the line. No department escaped his eyes. Station-masters who worked in the Esquimaux regions of Frozenfeetock were frequently alarmed by the sudden appearance of this animated hair-pin—at the wrong moment, of course; usually when they were having an innocent keek at their 'Arran Chiefs' or their sweet-peas for the local flower-show. With a hop, step, and a jump round a country goods-yard, he could discover signs of those who purloined coal-dust and bagged wagon-grease out of the axle-boxes for oiling their wheelbarrows, prams, and American watches. Nothing

escaped him! The slight heaving of a tarpaulin in a goods-wagon roused him to action front, and in a flash he would be dragging a wild, red-eyed, delirium tremen(dous) whisky-sooker before the startled orbs of a douce, trust-everybody local staff. The man was a marvel, greater than Maskelyne, more electric than the penny-in-the-slot machines in the ice-cream shops.

If you know anything about railways, you will recall what is known as the great 'razor-strop raids' some years ago. This was simply the cutting of window-straps by mischievous and parsimonious persons to use as strops. No line escaped these rascally depredations. If a brand-new train was turned out on the line in the morning, half the straps were missing in the evening. For a long time there was no solution to the problem. No substitute for leather could be found. The expense and annoyance were embarrassing. Something had to be done. Here entered 'Sheet Lightning.' He was of a chemical turn of mind, and this knowledge became important. After patient research, he discovered a composition which, spread on a window-strap, subsequently used for sharpening a razor, created on the face of the shaver something akin to a pimple-

culture of a mountainous order which lasted a month and caused annoyance to the affected. It was not infectious, not dangerous, just annoying, and deservedly so. The end was to justify the means. And so 'Sheet Lightning' smeared the straps of a selected train. At night half of the straps were missing. 'Sheet Lightning,' however, went to bed quite pleased, and three days afterwards surveyed the same train disgorging its passengers. He grinned.

Pimples to right of 'im,
Pimples to left of 'im,
Pimples in front of 'im,
Pimples and pimples
All round about 'im.

They were all cursing their barbers, don't ye know, and crying, 'Foul shave;' but 'Sheet Lightning' upset this aspersion on the shampoo profession by the insertion of a par. in the local newspapers to the effect that railway-carriage window-straps were highly dangerous when used for stropping a razor, causing a strange complaint called pimpleitis. Season-ticket holders were recommended to use safety-razors *or emery-paper.*

That ended the great 'razor-strop raids.'

You will at once realise his great

prestige. He was the favourite topic in booking-offices, engine-shops, and goods-yards. The honest advertised their honesty, while the dishonest were advertised out of their dishonesty. Gradually men adopted the maxim that '*It didna pey to pinch.*'

That was all 'Sheet Lightning' demanded, what he was paid for, and what he achieved. He had his admirers, too. Maister M'Muckle was one. The maister had studied human nature on the platform and in the Bible, and well knew the need of the detective force. The feeling was mutual. When the great detective appeared at Kirkbride, it was to have a crack with the maister and a look at the boys. It was the boys he was after, not the maister. And M'Muckle was glad of anybody or any system which put the doctrine of fire and brimstone into youthful souls. Well did the super-detective know how laddies will smoke anything from tea-leaves to brown paper and railway tickets; how they will heap more than the regulation two ounces of coal on to a waiting-room fire; and in waving to a bewitching lady guard or a tempting message-lassie, forget to collect the tickets or haul in the excess fares.

Any railway company which failed to collar the excess fares from the non-ticket-

buying section of the populace would go bankrupt. Something for nothing ruins the best of businesses, even religion. And so the railways have an elaborate system of checking and counter-checking. A man like 'Sheet Lightning' often casually drops the fare from another station into a collector's hands, and hurries away without the receipt. But when the books are examined and the entry is found to be missing, down comes the hand of the mighty. Boys like Tam and Puddin', who, like all Scotch boys, were brought up on a halfpenny a week, and occasionally 'the smell o' a penny,' suffered the temptations of Adam when they found their hands full of money from excess fares. Somehow the money conjured up visions of cream chocolate, sliders, Woodbines, hot peas and vinegar. Many a slider and plate of hot peas has reduced the dividends of a railway company, and so there must be a system to protect the company and the boys.

'What d'ye think o' your boys?' inquired 'Sheet Lightning' of the maister one day.

'Oh, they're fine laddies.'

'Honest?'

'Ay, man. Honest as St Paul.'

'You're shair?'

'Very D'ye ken, man, I've been a'

my life in the railway, and never had a bad boy. I trust the laddies, and talk kindly to them. But, mind ye, I think they micht diddle *you*.'

'Hoo's that, M'Muckle?'

'Jist for deevilment. They like to bate folk that's smerter than themselves. They're like the weemin—awfu' contrary.'

'Man, I've tried them—often.'

'Hiv ye, though?' said the maister, looking up.

'Ay; an' no a penny missin'.'

'Man, man, but I'm rale pleased to hear that. It mak's ma hert rejoice, for I'm jist rale fond o' them, an' wudna like ony o' them to get a bad report.'

'True, true, M'Muckle; but there's ae thing that I canna fathom the noo.'

'It maun be deeficult if ye canna get at it.'

'Ay; it's a tough problem, and a funny yin. D'ye ken, M'Muckle, somebody's sookin' the sausages.'

'*Sookin' the sausages!*' exclaimed the maister, taking off his specs. 'Man, that's the queerest thing I've heard for mony a day.'

'It's true.'

'Explain, John.'

'The parcels that are sent oot are gettin' interfered wi'. When the sausages

leave the warehouse they 're a' richt. When they are delivered to the customers they 're half-empty. It 's been gaun on for a lang time, an' I 'm hanged if I can get at it.'

'Hoo d' ye ken they 're sooked?'

'I took some back to the factory. When the manager looked at them he jist said, "Sooked." It seems to be a common thing among butchers' boys. They go up a close or roond a corner, pit yin o' the links in their mooth and sook out hauf o' the meat.'

'They 're no sooked here. A' ma laddies get their meat; in fact, they 're ower weel fed at the back-doors. Na, 'na; it 's no here.'

'I 'm no sayin' that, man; but ye micht keep yer eyes open, and help me.'

'I 'll dae that wi' pleesure.'

'That 's a' I want. Guid-mornin'.'

'Guid-mornin', John,' concluded the maister as the great detective went out at the door.

When the door shut Maister M'Muckle sat down and laughed heartily. 'Sooked! D—— me! that 's the best thing I 've heard for many a day.—Here, boys,' he shouted to Tam and Puddin' as they entered the office.

They came up to the fire.

'Sit doon, laddies. I 've something to

tell ye.' Then he related the story. Continuing, he said, 'I dinna like it. It's a reflection on the Circle, an' on the honour o' the Company. *We're a' daecent folk oot here.*'

'It's *no* me, onywey,' declared Puddin'. 'I wudna mind a mealie puddin', but no a sausage—no a sausage.'

'An' it's *no* me,' affirmed Tam. 'I kent a wee butcher's boy that sooked yin an' died wi' fricht. It wis a *horse* sausage, no a *coo* sausage.'

'I'm no sayin' it's ony o' you laddies; but we canna hae suspeecions o' sookin' hingin' ower oor heids. Bring the next parcel to me afore ye deliver it, an' we'll see if they're richt or no.'

This order they gladly obeyed. When the maister opened the box, sure enough, three of the sausages looked as if they suffered from debility and were 'wantin' their meat.'

'Man, that's funny. Shairly it's no the guaird?'

'It canna be him,' declared Puddin'.

'Whit wey, man?'

'He couldna sook three sausages between Glesca an' here. There's ower mony stops, an' ower mony dugs on the pletforms. The dugs wud jump in and feenish them. Na, na, it's no the guaird.'

'It's no the railway folk at a'; "Sheet Lichtnin'" ocht to ken that. We're ower frichtened even to lick the numbers aff the tickets,' said Tam.

'Ay, boys; but there'll be nae peace till we settle aboot this sookin'. If ye can get the rascal, I'll gie ye hauf-a-croon.'

'The hauf-croon's mine,' Puddin' remarked, looking up from his Sexton Blake observations of the inanimate sausages.

'Oh!' ejaculated the maister.

'Ay.'

'Whit wey?'

'Jist wait an' see. I'll nab him.'

'Nab awa', laddie;' and the maister turned to the books.

Meantime Puddin', in accordance with the best traditions of the detective world, was making notes preparatory to his scoop. In a little book he made the following entries: '(1) Hauf empty sausages. (2) Grain o' tobacco on them. (3) Also scent o' Woodbine. (4) Smell o' thick black.'

'I suppose ye're kiddin' on ye're Sexton Blake,' Tam remarked in a sarcastic way.

'Sherlock Holmes this time, Tam.'

'Sherlock! Ye're a bonny 'tec.! The last time ye copped a tally-wally for a

German. I expect ye'll be nabbin' an auld man wi' nae teeth this time.'

'Ach! ye're jealous.'

'I'm no.'

'Ye are so.'

'I'll bet ye twa-dee that ye canna catch the sausage-sooker.'

'Pit it doon, then.'

'There!' Tam placed his money down.

'Ye'll lose it this time.'

'Ach, you!' and Tam turned away to read a serial entitled *Tubby Tommy, the Boy who Captured a German Onion-Boat.*'

Puddin', true to his instinct for man-hunting, was quite convinced that none of the railway staff were involved, the plain reason being that 'Sheet Lightning' had put the fear of Auld Nick into them. And as Puddin' said to himself, 'It wudna be worth a docken or their job to sook three sausages. A can o' fresh mulk or a barrel o' Younger's wud be a mair likely thing.' Having established this theory, he concentrated on the 'Glesca' end of the business, and arrived at the following:

(1) Wha brocht the sausages to the station?

(2) Whit like wis he?

(3) Did he chow thick black?

This was evidence of clear thinking, revealing a knowledge of the theories

of detective-work. It now remained for Puddin' to see if they panned out. Next day, when off duty, he made his way to the parcel-office in 'Glesca.' *En route* he saw 'Sheet Lightning' make a flying-leap on to a fast-running Cathcart train. Puddin' concluded he was 'efter' the guard. The amateur smiled at the one great defect of 'Sheet Lightning.' The detective always looked for his clues *in the railway*, whereas Puddin' believed that the clues could be more easily found *off the railway*. In any case, he would attempt to prove the rival of Fouché to be in the wrong—*this time*.

Puddin' arrived at the parcel-office.

For a long time he hung around the door. At last he was rewarded. A red-eyed, bubbly-nosed youth, with a hatchet face and a lean, eating-diabetes form, staggered up with a dozen boxes labelled: 'SAUSAGES—FRAGILE.'

'Hi!' he shouted at the clerk.

'Whit are ye hyin' aboot?'

'Tak' thae sausages.'

'Auld cats, ye mean.'

'Nane o' yer lip,' said the message-boy, spitting out a 'chew.'

Puddin' spotted the 'spit,' and mentally registered this as *Clue One*. As the boy shoved the boxes over, he noted his hands.

They were yellow with nicotine. *Clue Two.* There only remained one thing to prove. Did this boy sook the sausages? From a passing remark Puddin' gathered that he was going back for more parcels. When the youth turned, Puddin' dogged him to his headquarters. The messenger came out with another load and ambled on to the station. Turning into a quiet street, he made for a convenient close. Puddin' casually followed on the opposite side, and while seemingly interested in the antics of a sparrow, out of the corner of his eye saw the youth open a box, and in about three shakes of a lamb's tail sook half-a-dozen sausages.

'Got ye, ma lad,' he mumbled, making off for the office of 'Sheet Lightning.'

'Come in,' said the great detective.

'It 's me.'

'Ay ; but wha are you ?'

'Puddin' Broon.'

'Whut 's up ?'

'I 've nabbed the sausage-sooker.'

'You !'

'Ay, me,' said Puddin' proudly.

'Wha made you a detective on the line ?'

'Masel'. Maister M'Muckle promised me hauf-a-croon if I got him.'

'But that 's ma business.'

'It 's oors tae. We boys are no gaun to get the blame o' sookin' sausages. A' the boys on the line are frichtened for ye, but I 'm no. *I come frae Pollokshaws.*'

This plucky assault on the long-established impregnability of 'Sheet Lightning' rather staggered him, but he had the virtue to see he was dealing with a nippy youth, also to know that it was his duty to co-operate, despite the fact that this mere boy had so easily discovered what he had hitherto regarded as 'the sausage mystery.' Pocketing his professional pride, he put on his hat, and said, 'Come on—show me your proofs.'

'Richt ye are;' and Puddin' boldly led him out. They waited for the youth at the parcel-office, and on examination of a package, discovered sooked sausages *again.*

'Man, that bates a',' said the detective. 'I 've been in the business o' crime for forty years, but never did I ken there was such a business as sausage-sookin'. You laddies are gettin' ower oreeginal for the detective force. Here, Puddin', there 's another hauf-croon to ye. Ye 're a credit to the Company.'

'Thenk ye.'

Next morning Puddin' also received a letter from the superintendent of the line,

congratulating him and raising his salary by *another* half-crown.

'Tam,' said Puddin'.

'Whit?'

'Haund ower yer twa-dee.'

'There ye are, Sherlock Holmes.'

Here endeth the sausage-sookin'.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT POLLOKSHIELDS.

THE relieving staff on the railway is a floating gang of bachelors who assume duty while the permanent staff are on holidays. You can usually tell a relief man. A relief station-master resembles a cross between an aspiring porter and a 'nippy' ticket-collector. He always coughs to hide his embarrassment when he comes on to the platform, and when he waves the flag to the guard he does it in a way which suggests an apology for his existence. In the booking-office he steps in an uncertain manner, afraid to exercise the majesty of his rank, and, to keep the peace, will even descend to smoking a Woodbine with a boy-porter. The reason for this timidity is lack of permanent rank, and the disadvantages of being a temporary gent. Another reason given by the porters is that relief station-masters are usually 'pushin' yins,' those who want to break the laws of seniority, and by the aid of a smooth tongue and a director's kick in the —— get hold of this job, preparatory to jumping the per-

manent pitch of a station-master who, *for a moment*, forgets that his body, soul, breeks, and a' are the sole property of the Company, and indulges in a long-hidden hauf-mutchkin—*jist to show his independence.* It's a queer world the railway, and the uncertainty of tenure is the reason which makes all ranks freeze on to their jobs like limpets.

This, by the way, is simply a preliminary blether to introduce the question of relieving duty, a task which, by the hand of Fate, devolved on Snooker Tam.

'Tam,' said the maister one morning.

'Ay.'

'You're for relievin' duty at Pollokshields.'

'Whit's up?'

'Wee Tam M'Jink's got the measles.'

'But I thocht I wis permanent here?'

'Man, there's naethin' permanent on the railway except the permanent wey, and even the sleepers get the seck for speakin' back to the engines. Dae whut ye're telt.'

'But wull I get back here?' whimpered Tam, his eyes drifting to Maggie, who was also ill at ease.

'Ay, ay. Off ye go.'

Tam went out to the door like Napoleon after Waterloo. Jumping into the train

with a heavy heart, he flung himself back on the cushions to muse on Maggie, the five wee slaveys, and even Puddin', whom he was leaving behind. No doubt there would be hospitable back-doors in Pollokshields, but the bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and he knew that Jimmy M'Cloon would now have a clear coast and a great opportunity to become the life-long idol of Maggie. Besides, that youth Puddin' was stirring himself. Puddin', he observed, was now wearing a new rubber dicky and a vermilion tie. He had been buying sweeties of late instead of *The Boys' Friend;* in short, Puddin' was feeling his feet, and beginning to understand that the lads were meant to chase the lassies. 'It wis a bit thick,' concluded Tam as the train stopped at Pollokshields.

You must understand that Pollokshields is a most important station. This opinion is not endorsed in Newlands, Maxwell Park, or Kelvinside. Nevertheless, it is important. The failure to recognise the social status of any citizen of Pollokshields entails social ostracism and an absence of Pollokshields visiting-cards (4 × 4) on your hall table. As a matter of fact, Pollokshields claims all the ancient glories of faded Park Circus, and avers that all those who live within its bounds wipe their

lips with napkins and sleep in pyjamas—even the ladies. The ladies *never* carry their parcels, and all message-boys *must* go round to the back-door. Surely this reveals that Pollokshields is the haunt of the mighty, no matter what other suburbs say; but, to hold the balance even, we must give the Newlands point of view. Here it is as expressed in visiting-cards:

MRS PRIM POLITELY.

At Home,
2 P.M.–2.20 P.M.,
1st Wednesday.

Marble Avenue,
Pollokshields.

MRS CHEEREMUP.

At Home
always.

Plentyville,
Newlands.

The Newlands card shows the cosmopolitan meet-everybody generosity of the *nouveau riche*. So says Pollokshields, *not* the author—Heavens, no! He dare not enter into this terrible controversy. How-

ever, Pollokshields is interesting. It understands the fashions, can value 'form,' and no lady will be found in red stockings, yellow skirt, or a corned-beef coloured bonnet. Indeed, some of the prettiest girls come from Pollokshields, and any one who has seen its famous tennis-club will agree that in feminine productions Pollokshields has 'the goods.' There is also dignity in its pose. The stately demeanour of its avenues somehow stops messengers from whistling 'Annie Roonie,' and causes Ford cars to scoot through like blazes, lest they be outdone by a local nickel-plated, blue enamelled, flower-bedecked Rolls-Royce. *They have got 'the hard stuff' in Pollokshields.*

Now, there's a reason for everything on the railway, even the weighing of your luggage. Just as you buy boots to fit your feet, so does the railway company choose station-masters to fit the various kinds of stations. This procedure is based on the principle, for Gallowgate, a knock-out; for Pollokshields, a polished 'How-d'ye-do-sir?' sort of man. And, as the porters say, 'they send them [the porters] there to learn hoo to lift their bunnets.' The station-masters of Pollokshields have always been men of the world—able to distinguish between those who are likely

to lunch with the directors and those who are not. They have the grand manner akin to that of the gentleman who wears a gold-braided top-hat in the Central. When they step abroad they breathe the air of majesty, and when the top-hat (or bonnet) comes off, it is done in the style of a Spanish señor.

You will at once say, 'What the devil has all this got to do with Tam?' Everything! It was a new world. From a happy, hail-fellow-well-met booking-office at Kirkbride he was plunged into the austere dignities of Pollokshields. There were no secret 'draws' at Woodbines in that department which is usually at the end of the station buildings. He had to get a move on, scrub his rubber dicky, knock the egg-dreeps off his tartan tie, and sleep on his trousers to get a crease on them. The skip of his bonnet had to be polished with beeswax, while he had to blaw his breath on his buttons and rub them hard to get them as clean as the sodgers'. A revolution! From a tow-headed gum-chewer he was compelled to be a well-scrubbed automaton who had to salute the 'heid yins' and see all 'the Gorbals yins' off the premises—*at once. There's no mixed company in Pollokshields.*

'Here, boy,' said the new maister.

'Whit?'

'Whit are ye whittin aboot? Is that the wey ye answer yer betters?'

'I didna ken. I'm only an apprentice.'

'Say "sir," an' move slippy. Awa' wi' that parcel to Gold Plate Avenue.'

'Richt ye are.' Tam couldn't handle the 'sir.' It stuck in his gills. His forebears had voted for Gladstone and Bradlaugh. But he went off quickly, eager to explore the back-doors of his new town. *En route* he was particularly struck with the many charming ladies in tailor modes, and for once he longed to be 'a toff' and give them 'the nod.' On entering Gold Plate Avenue he drew his breath. He had never seen such large houses, and wondered if they were museums. At last he reached his destination, a magnificent place redolent of 50 per cent. from rubber, tea, or oil. His quick eye caught a notice:

ALL MESSAGE-BOYS
MUST GO ROUND TO THE
BACK-DOOR.

'Jings! They don't hauf pit it on oot here!' he mumbled, blundering through the gate and knocking at the back-door.

True to tradition, he was kept waiting for fifteen minutes. This is an unwritten law, and one designed to impress all democrats. It was invented by the superior Curzons. Then the door opened, and a haughty, perjink sort of maid appeared.

'Here, Annie; here's yer percel.'

'Annie! Wha are ye Anniein' at?'

'I thocht that wis yer name.'

'Dinna think, then.'

'Ye're awfu' sniffy.'

'You're very cheeky.'

'Ach, awa'!'

'You awa'.'

'Hiv ye no a sangwidge an' a cup o' Mazawatee?'

'No.'

'Ye're gey funny oot here.'

'Whit station wis you at before?'

'Kirkbride.'

'I tho't that;' and the door banged in such a way that it blew his bonnet off. He picked it up, knocked the Pollokshields dust off, and with a grin adjusted it on his head and went out, banging the gate in such a way that an old pedestrian *jumped* and let fall a set of ivories out of his mouth.

'Sorry, maister,' said Tam, lifting a beautiful plate of incisors and molars and handing it to him.

'Learn to shut a gate properly, my boy,' was the short retort.

'Ach, awa'!' and Tam strolled off, very much annoyed with his first back-door experience in Pollokshields.

But when not worrying about Maggie, Puddin', or Jimmy M'Cloon, he found much to enliven him in Pollokshields. The robust old gentlemen who dealt in tobacco, rubber, oil, ships, boilers, and Highland Dew were a class apart. Dignified, breathing pound-notes, and handling bundles of 'fivers' when taking a tuppenny ticket. Generous, too, for they threw their shillings around as if they were farthings. 'The men make the city,' and they were typical of the proud old bailies who used to walk 'the plainstanes' and risked their Scots pounds in the clippers that brought wealth and fame to the Clyde. As for their wives, Tam was impressed by the stout, bustling ladies, clad in silks and ermine, many of whom had helped the guidmen to mak' their siller in ham, beef, or coal. If they did reveal their origin by asking for a first-*cless* ticket, that to Tam was simply the hall-mark of greatness. They had worked for their position, and Tam only respected those who had. After all, it is these hearty women who are the mothers of men, the good counsellors of rising

business Napoleons, and the steady friends in black adversity, as they are the cheerful companions in success. Tam took to the old ladies, for they were mothers; and mothers of all degrees always love boys, be they ever so poor. Many a sixpence and big fat orange were pushed into his hand. As he said himself, 'The auld yins are no mean, onywey.'

But the youth of Pollokshields created mixed feelings within his breast. Somehow the chocolate-coloured bonnet of the High School still roused his ire. The only explanation that Tam gave was that 'they were aye pittin' it on.' But the prejudice really arose through the High School monopoly of all the pretty flappers in pig-tails. Being just a boy-porter, he had no innings, and he did resent these pretty darlings jumping into dark first-class carriages with youthful Byrons and 'no askin' *him* in.' Sheer jealousy! However, he had a great admiration for all the pretty young ladies who, clad in smart tailors' modes, white gloves (mustn't forget the white gloves), coquettish hats, neat and none of your d—— nonsense footwear, with a Drooko umbrella and a ten-pound crocodile bag, took the train on Saturday mornings for the time-honoured Buchanan–Renfield–Sauchiehall Street parade. If

you happen to be 'a blood,' you will know all about this social event. These well-groomed, healthy-skinned, and hefty wenches roused him to poetic ardour. Indeed, he even winked at the more daring of the tribe. Being public-school girls, they laughed; and if Tam had been five years older, with an R. W. Forsyth's tweed suit on his back, he would have 'got off,' for they have a quiet longing for the Devil in Pollokshields.

'The bloods,' of course, got a mixed reception from him. Tam thought they were 'too toffy,' and *the yawn*, cultivated at Dollar, Blair Lodge, Glenalmond, Oxford, or Cambridge, left him cold. These youths could give him his orders. Tam hated orders. He liked 'to be asked, no pushed.' But Tam was an unreasoning democrat, secretly jealous of jaunty bowlers, tight-waisted jackets, and turned-up trousers. Between you and me, Tam wanted to be one of 'The Boys,' one of those gay youths who work from ten to eleven and three to four, and between-times drink coffee in Craig's, or tell the old old tale in the lounge of the picture-house. But he copied them, and, by saving up his tips, got a ready-made swanky Harris-tweed outfit, a chase-me-Charlie Homburg hat, American bulb-toed boots, gloves (one

shilling and elevenpence three-farthings), and a Fair Holiday cane at sixpence (sixpence halfpenny with a silver mount). At last he was 'one of them,' and on the first Sunday out there was a terrific commotion amongst the wee slaveys who take the air in Queen's Park. When the bold Lothario walked through, swinging his cane and blowing reek from a Woodbine, the eyes of the wee Maggies and Marys opened wide.

'By jings, that's a smert yin!'

'The goods.'

'An awfu' nut.'

Tam had his ears cocked for all these things; indeed, like Beau Brummell, he expected them. This advent into social greatness lifted him to the heights of daring and romance. And then he got a *bump*.

Ahead was Puddin', his hefty figure dressed in a nutty Norfolk suit, while his red face was surmounted by a brand-new half-crown straw hat. He was smoking a cheroot, and now and again flicking off the ash with his little finger in the style of a wealthy Jew. Smugness personified.

Maggie, more sweet than ever, was walking by his side.

'Heavens! . . . Jings! . . . HELLP!' muttered Tam, who, as yet, was not

observed by the devoted couple. It was an awkward moment, a *desperate* fix; but with the readiness of a courtier he gave 'the nod' to a charming little nursemaid, hooked her arm, and walked past blushing Maggie and the now apoplectic Puddin', like Duggy Haig 'cutting' Hindenburg in Mons.

'Oh my! I'm frichtened,' declared Maggie.

'I'm no,' said Puddin'.

'It's your fau't.'

'You're a fine yin, efter me buyin' thae joojoobs. Am I no as guid as him?'

'Come on; the folk are lookin',' said Maggie, pulling the angry Puddin' on.

'A' richt; but, mind ye, ye'll no get me to buy ye cookies an' tea at Rouken Glen again. Ye're only playin' wi' Jimmy M'Cloon and me. It's Tam ye want!'

'Mebbe! But here's the caur. Bye-bye;' and off she ran.

'That bates a'!' said Puddin', scratching his head. 'Hang them a'! I'm feenished wi' lassies. I wush I had stayed at hame an' read *Comic Cuts*.' He turned away towards Pollokshaws with just a feeling of something going to happen.

He was beginning to feel Tam's fist on his nose.

CHAPTER XIV.

TIPS.

TIPS and tipping tinge the outlook of the railwayman. How the business started is not quite clear, but it is alleged that at the Flood several politicians, in danger from the deluge, tipped Noah with gifts of dates, oranges, and bananas, and so lived to transmit their wiles and—tips. Anyhow, we have had tipping from B.C. The sheikhs of old bribed their way into their brothers' harems, and greased the palms of the Eastern Bowery Boys. And so it travelled. In the words of the music-hall song, 'Everybody 's doing it.'

That is why it costs us sixpence to look at a porter and half-a-crown for three words with a guard. When we move from Brigton to Yokohama we always reckon up tips with other incidentals. Even royalty is not exempt. Every time His Majesty travels north it means a diamond tie-pin for the superintendent of the line. In Germany—*cheap* Germany—it cost the Kaiser an autographed oleograph portrait, produced at a Munich factory at the rate of a gross for a mark. The nickel-plated emperor also carried a

box of nickel-plated tips, for which the Herrs and Fraus shouted, 'Hoch!' As for the German porters, they usually got a 'thick ear' if they looked for anything after carrying 'Wullie's' imitation leather bags. There are no big tips in Germany, and that was why we had so many German waiters before the war. Tipping is even an Imperial game. We keep a hundred nigger kings playing with geisha-girls instead of muskets by simply dropping lakhs of rupees into their hands. Yes, everybody's doing it.

Travellers quickly learn the rules of the game. For example, there are ways of tipping. When the *nouveau riche* commence, they usually hold out the tip on the open palm. This is *infra. dig.* from the porter's point of view. He likes you to 'slip it.' 'Slipping' is not such a jar to his democratic principles. Other lessons must be acquired. You may hand threepence to a porter, never to a guard. A 'local' might accept it; an express guard *never*. The mandarins of the Main Trunk Line have their standards, and they judge you by them. You can always risk a shilling, but it is really better to tender a good half-crown. The half-crown excites a Monkey Brand smile, and you may read in his eyes a statement to this effect: 'The

next time you travel, sir; carriage to yourself, sir; corner seat, sir; perhaps a cup of tea, sir.' Scotsmen and Jews are great tippers. When half the population are standing on each others' toes, or rubbing noses in the corridors, you will often see Sandy and Solomon first-class, *all to themselves*, feet on the cushions, blinds down, and a friendly lock on the door. *They know the noble art.*

Tips vary according to the stations. At the Central—not bad; at Brigton—uncertain; and at Govan—*a skelp on the lug.* As for the Cathcart Circle, it varies from a sixpence at Pollokshields to 'twa-dee' at Pollokshaws or Cathcart, except at the Fair Holidays, when the usual rate is '*a tanner a ton.*' Believe me, all this is closely discussed in the porters' room. It was a subject of vital interest to Tam. He already had a Sunday suit out of the system, and had hopes of a bicycle and an American watch. One night he discussed the matter with Bob Dourface, a sad, solemn youth.

'Hoo much did ye mak' the day, Bob?' he inquired.

'Three-dee.'

'I got twa bob.'

'Jings! ye're lucky. Hoo is it ye get sae much?'

'Giein them the nod.'

'The nod?'

'Ay.'

'I 've been giein them the nod for a year, but it 's no very profitable.'

'It 's yer face.'

'Whit 's wrang wi' ma face?' inquired Bob in his solemn way.

'It 's no ceevil.'

'It 's ceevil enough.'

'Ach ay; but it 's no a tippin' face.'

'Whit 's yer face got to dae wi' tippin'?'

'Ye see, it 's like this. First of a', ye 've got to hae a lauchin' face an' show yersel' willin', whether ye 're willin' or no. Jump aboot an' keep "sirrin'" them. They 're awfu' fond o' the "sir," 'specially them that are no toffs.'

'I 've tried that,' was the sad retort.

'Ay; but ye aye strike the mean yins.'

'Hoo can ye tell?'

'Them that cairries their luggage in the cairriage an' no in the van, 'specially if they 're third-cless. Jook them!'

'But I got tuppence the day frae a man that had a bag in the cairriage.'

'He 's the exception, an' mebbe he wis fou. Na! A' the tippers shuv their luggage in the van.'

'But I lifted a man's luggage oot the van yesterday an' got naethin'.'

'Mebbe he wis a director o' the Company. Ye let them aff free. Railways are no peyin' weel the noo!'

'Ach, ye're a blether!'

'I'm no.'

'Ye are so.'

'You watch the boys at the Central. They ken hoo to jook them that disna tip. Wan o' them telt me that he only had the wan "miss."'

'Wha was the misser?'

'A deid man in a first-cless; but he got his *Tit-Bits*.'

'I'm aye pickin' the deid yins, then,' mumbled Bob.

'Seems like it; an' ye're ower quick at grabbin' weemin's percels, tae. Weemin seldom tip. Weemin are awfu' mean wi' their money. Rush the men, 'specially fat men. Thin yins are gey ticht. Ye get to ken if ye're nippy.'

'You're gey nippy, onywey. Strikes me you leave me a' the jookers.'

'Mebbe!'

'Ay, mebbe,' was the dismal response.

'But ye can *mak'* folk gie ye tips,' persisted Tam.

'Ye canna.'

'Ye can so.'

'Hoo can ye mak' a Scotsman gie awa' money?'

'Lookin' at him.'

'Lookin'!'

'Ay! You watch the auld porters at the big stations. When they shuv the last bag in they aye turn wi' a lauch an' say, "That's the lot, sir." Sometimes they lift their bunnet when there's a chance o' raisin' the price, but they aye look hard into the passenger's face, as much as to say, "I'm expectin' it, an' if ye dinna stump up I'll ken ye the next time." *That's the trick.*'

'I've tried that tae,' Bob mournfully replied.

'Did it no work?'

'Na.'

'Whit wey?'

'He asked what the h—— I was lookin' at.'

'Ach! ye hivna got the knack.'

'Mebbe no; but it's no the railway you should be in.'

'Whaur should I be?'

'In the Proodenshul.'

'Hoo's that?'

'Ye ken hoo to get sixpence a week oot o' a Hielanman or a stane wa'!'

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLANATIONS.

ONE morning Puddin' was startled by Tam's return from Pollokshields. The wee fellow was a bit nervous, for he was expecting an encounter of some kind.

'Hello!' grunted Tam.

'Ye're back!'

'Ay; it's time.'

'Ye hivna been missed.'

'Hiv I no?'

'Na.'

'You're no a pal, onywey.'

'Hoo's that?'

'Fine ye ken.'

'Ken whit?'

'Ach! nae camouflage. Ye ken whit I'm gettin' at.'

'Shair as daith.'

'It'll mebbe be *your* daith.'

'Awa'; it's Beecham's you're needin'.'

'Keep to the pint.'

'Whit pint?'

'Whit ye've been daein'.'

'Daein'?'

'Ay.'

'I've been daein' ma duty.'

'Ither folk's tae.'

'It's an argument ye want,' persisted Puddin', who was half-afraid to come to the scratch.

'Nane o' yer Pollokshaws kiddin'; whit richt hiv you to be wi' her?'

'Wha?'

'Ye ken fine.'

'Maggie?' blurted Puddin', absolutely tired of fencing.

'Ay, Maggie! It's gey funny ye didna try it on when I was here, but when I had ma back turned ye were buyin' her sweeties an' walkin' her oot. That's no a pal's gem'. It's a Pollokshaws gem'.'

'Ane wud think ye were mairret to the lassie, to hear ye talkin'. Ye've got five o' thae slaveys on the hop as weel as Maggie. An' ye think because I'm a wee fellah I canna speak to her or walk her oot. D' ye think it's only the big fellahs that should hae the lassies? Ma faither's a wee man, and there's ten in the faimily. A wee fellah can talk jist as weel as a big yin.'

'There's nae doot aboot that. Ye could talk the heid aff a canary. But you keep to yer Sexton Blake an' sugarally-water. I'll look efter Maggie.'

'If she'll let ye.'

'That's ma business.'

'It's Jimmy M'Cloon's tae.'

'Ach! Him!'

'Ay, he can pit the kybosh on ye. Ye're no a big enough toff for Maggie.'

'Am I no?'

'Na.'

'Ye seem to ken.'

'Ay; she telt me she didna like to walk ye oot on a Sunday because ye weer yin o' thae blue rubber dickies, red socks, and a hooker-doon. She likes a chap wi' a bowler, bent-doon collars, and turned-up troosers.'

'I've got a new suit.'

'Ay—a ready-made yin.'

'Hoo d' ye ken it's ready-made?'

'I saw ye wi' it.'

'That's nae proof.'

'Ma mither runs a menauge—a shillin' a week. That's the stuff you've got. When ye get a shooer o' rain the glue rins oot o' the claith, an' ye'll mebbe find yersel' wi' jist yer buttons on, an' yer troosers lyin' like a bit o' broon paper on the road. I wudna weer them. A' ma claes are tailor-made.'

'But I've got a new Homburg hat.'

'A Jew's bunnet.'

'That's whit the toffs are weerin', onywey.'

'Ye've got the suit, ye've got the bunnet, but ye hivna got Maggie.'

'Hiv you?'

'Na.'

'Wha has?'

'Jimmy M'Cloon.'

. . . . .

'Ye're awfu' queer these days, Tam,' said the maister a little later. 'Are ye no weel?'

'I'm weel enough, Maister M'Muckle.'

'But ye're kin' o' soor, Tam, an' no like yer auld sel'. Is't the lassies?'

'Mebbe.'

'Ye're sair hurt, Tam, eh?'

'No very.'

'Ye're sufferin' frae calf-love. Man, man, when I wis a boy I had it bad. I used to fa' in love wi' a' the lady passengers an' cairry their bags for naethin', but a sair back cured me o' that.'

'Lassies are funny.'

'Oh ay, gey funny. I've had a lass for mony years, Tam, an' I dinna ken her yet; but she kens a' aboot me—kens me ootside-in. Weemin are awfu' mysterious. Ye maun thole them, pit up wi' their cantrips, an' ye'll find they're no sae bad. They're awfu' guid when ye're seeck. Whiles I get lumbago jist to get attended to an' get ma back weel rubbed. They're awfu' fond o' the rubbin' job.'

'They'll no rub me.'

'Man, man, dae ye tell me that? Ye hivna got the wey o' them. Gie them rope for a week, an' a chug noo an' then. That 's whit they like. They 're fond o' a man wi' the strength to smack an' wi' the love to soothe them. They 're barbarians, Tam; jist barbarians.'

'Jings, ye 're richt!'

'Ay; but it tak's ye forty year to learn a' that. When ye 're young ye fash yer heid, spend yer money, and git cauld feet and lumbago waitin' for them at the corner. It 's no worth the bother. Keep the oppiseetion weel afore them, an' ye 'll shair hae them greetin' for yer love. I ken, Tam. I ken.'

'I wush *I* kent.'

'Is 't Maggie?' asked the maister, looking over his specs, with a twinkle in his eye.

Tam scratched his head, shifted his feet, and blurted out, 'Ay.'

'She 's a bonny lass.'

'Ay.'

'An' a guid lassie!'

'Ay.'

'Stylish!'

'Ay.'

'Awfu' clever wi' the books!'

'Ay.'

'Guid in the hoose to Tam.'

'Ay.'

'An' she 's got a bank-book.'

'Oh!'

'Ay.'

'That 's news, Maister M'Muckle.'

'Is 't? But, mind ye, ye canna play aboot wi' ithers an' hae Maggie. She 's prood!'

'But I wis jist kiddin' the ither yins on.'

'Mak'in' her jealous, eh?'

'Ay.'

'That 's no the wey, Tam. Ye 're mak'in' the lassie desperate. Tak' ma advice, an' keep in wi' Maggie. Ye canna get the likes o' her at back-doors. She 'll help ye to get on. Mairry young, an' ye 'll die auld and happy.'

'Ay, maister; but she 's got anither chap.'

'Man, d' ye tell me that?'

'Ay.'

'Ye 're shair?'

'Certain.'

'Whit 's his name?'

'Jimmy M'Cloon.'

'Him?'

'Ay, him.'

'Man, ye 're blin'.'

'Whit wey?'

'Jimmy 's jist the sprat to catch the mackerel. He 's like the worms ye catch

the trout wi'. Lassies are awfu' guid at fishin' an' hookin'.'

'But wha's the fish?'

'Yersel', Tam—yersel'.'

. . . . . .

This chat with the genial and very wise Maister M'Muckle cheered Tam on. The maister, he believed, was always right. And on reviewing past tactics he came to the conclusion that with a bonny lass —and a proud one—it was no good being 'huffy' and adhering to the 'No speakin'' movement, very much in vogue in 'Glesca.' He would amend, and fight openly for the apple of his eye. That night they were alone in the booking-office.

'Like a chocolate, Maggie?'

'Oh ay—they're awfu' nice. Whit a lot! Ye're wastin' yer money, Tam,' she said, taking one, but well pleased to see this was a special sacrifice.

'No on you.'

'Oh!' she said, smiling pleasantly, and sticking her pen in her ear preparatory to a chat. Though young, she knew that Tam was now simmering with love.

'But, mind ye, Maggie, it's no fair to measure chaps because o' their chocolates.'

'I never dae that.'

'Ye used to.'

'That's no fair, Tam. A' the same, we

judge by the wee things. A lass that's worth only a pennyworth o' cough-drops to ae boy is shairly o' mair value to anither boy wi' his hauf-pun' o' M'Coll's. We lassies dinna like chaps that are mean.'

'I 'm no mean,' he protested.

'I wisna sayin' that.'

'Ye were thinkin' it—that 's worse.'

'Ye 're wrang.'

'I 'm no wrang. A pennyworth o' cough-drops frae a puir laddie is worth mair than a pun' o' M'Coll's frae a toff. You lassies hiv the wrang end o' the stick. Ony chap wi' turned-up troosers, a chase-me collar, an' a new straw basher gets ye. It 's no claes that mak' the man; it 's his weys. It 's weel seen you hivna read Rabbie Burns.'

'I hiv so!'

'Hoo hiv ye?'

'I ken a' aboot him. He wis a bad yin. Look whit he did to Bonnie Mary. By jings, he wudna hae jilted me like that! He wudna hae got the chance! An' ye 're jist tryin' to be anither Rabbie. That 's the fau't I 've got wi' you, an' *no* your cough-drops.'

'Michty me!'

'There 's nae michty aboot it. Every ten meenits there 's a servant-lassie here askin' if there 's ony persels for the hoose!'

'But I canna help that. It's no ma fau't if the lassies like me. Besides, I've to keep in wi' them to get profit for the Company. Ach, whit dae you ken aboot business? An' mair! the lassies canna help chasin' me the noo.'

'Hoo's that?'

'A' the men are at the war.'

'They're talkin' to onything in troosers the noo.'

'Ye're jealous; that's whit's wrang wi' you.'

'Weel, Tam, I'm no gaun to be number six on your list. I've mair pride than that.'

'I dinna want ye to be.'

'Whit then?'

'Number wan!'

'But whit aboot the ither lassies?'

'Puddin''ll look efter them. He's an apprentice, an' they can practise on him. Tak' anither chocolate. Ach, ye can hae the poke!'

'They're awfu' nice.'

'You're nicer.'

'Whiles—whiles.'

'Comin' to the picters the morn? Charlie Chaplin's on.'

'No the morn.'

'Whit wey?'

'I canna.'

'Hoo's that?'
'It's no convenient.'
'Whit's up?'
'No much.'
'A walk, eh?'
'Mebbe!'
'Wha wi'?'
'A freen'.'
'Whit freen'?'
'Yin that's gaun awa'.'
'Oh!'
'Ay.'
'Wha is it?'
'Naebudy perteecular.'
'It's him!'
'Wha's him?'
'Fine ye ken.'
'It's no.'
'It is so.'
'It's no so. See!'
'Ye're feart to tell, onywey.'
'I'm no feart to tell.'
'Well, tell.'
'It's ma faither.'
'Yer faither!'
'Ay.'
'But I never heard o' a lassie preferrin' her faither to a chap.'
'But he's gaun awa'.'
'Whaur to?'
'To gether wulks at Rothesay.'

CHAPTER XVI.

AIR-RAID INSTRUCTIONS (PARODIED).

SECRET.

TO THE STATION-MASTER.

On the alarm being sounded by the elderly Field-Marshal, whose headquarters are at the Café Snaw Blaw, Ben Nevis, prompt measures will be taken to ensure the shutting off of all lights, the stoppage of trains, gagging of refreshmented passengers, and consoling of young lady passengers who happen to be travelling on the line. For this purpose each station will arrange for the purchase of a milk-bell. As soon as the alarm is sounded, Snooker Tam will rush breathlessly on to the railway line, and by ringing his bell (and in urgent cases by the use of railway sleepers) immediately *stop* incoming trains. A bucket of water will then be issued to put out the engine fire, for which a receipt must be obtained. Lights will be turned off in all carriages; the doors locked; and in the event of undue giggling or unwarranted sympathy by elderly gentlemen, the lady members of the Local Vigilance

Society will be armed with spiked umbrellas and given charge of the old offenders, who will be returned under escort (umbrellas at the charge) to their respective wives.

A special gas apparatus will be given to the guard, containing mustard, chlorine, and *A—Hoosht!* This appliance will be used promptly on those passengers who suffer from that voluble disease described as *deliriums tremendous*, also on the air-shock cases who insist on crying for maw or paw, thus endangering the safety of Home Service Officers who may happen to be in the trains. The severest discipline will be enforced; for this purpose the guard will see that the engine-driver and the fireman arm themselves with red-hot fire-bars and patrol the line.

In the event of the enemy aeroplanes passing overhead, breathing must be prohibited, and all curtains drawn. No 'keeking' at the aeroplanes will be permitted, for it has been established that Hun airmen at ten thousand feet can observe the irises of flappers' eyes; the prevention of 'keeking' will, therefore, be readily understood. More important, as the elderly Field-Marshal is desirous of the tenderest consolation being offered to young lady passengers, he has arranged

with the various Commands for the immediate despatch to all trains of a number of unemployed generals who have been honourably mentioned for distinguished conduct in Paris and Salonica. These official sympathisers will be equipped with the regulation 'pack' of chocolates; pouches complete with Mark IV. caramels; water-bottle containing eau-de-Cologne; and a haversack packed with hankies, hair-pins, and hair-nets. Pending their arrival, all civilians *must* be warned off; but male relatives *may* temporarily assume charge, provided they secure the necessary authority from the local R.T.O. (Railway Transport Officer), which should be applied for (*in triplicate*) on Army Form X.Y.Z. 2,500,462, and forwarded to Chaperon-in-Chief, Air-Shock Department, Distress Section, Mond's Latest Hotel, Whitehall, London.

The gates leading to the station must be locked immediately. Passengers on the platform will be marshalled by the station-master, and then arranged in batches according to their social categories. O.B.E.'s, authors, journalists, and wine-merchants are to be accommodated in the first-class waiting-room, but the station-master may exercise his discretion in adding politicians and any other prize

pigeons in flight. The other passengers (with the exception of Bolsheviks) will be accommodated in the third-class waiting-rooms. As this class of mankind has not had the benefit of being at Eton, melodeons will be issued to maintain their *moral* and drown the cries of 'Help, help!' The Bolsheviks will be chained by the leg and locked in the open-air section of the gentlemen's department. A bright light may (unofficially) be fixed to the roof of this building for the purpose of drawing the enemy's fire and preserving the lives of the nice people who have not written to the editor complaining of the Military Service Act, or doing form-fours in itchy khaki trousers. Should the Bolsheviks make a disturbance, the hose is to be applied—*AT ONCE*.

During the period of alarm Maister M'Muckle will assume the temporary rank of Colonel, rank to be shown by four bands of phosphorus round the sleeves, and diamond sparkling crown and stars. A phosphorised Sam Browne belt will also be worn. A sword is optional; but to give a greater sense of reality, the station-master may dangle a poker from his waist, the clank-clank of which is akin to that of a cavalry sabre. This scheme was adopted by Napoleon on night visitations, and is

endorsed, on the grounds of economy, by His Majesty's Treasury. Military Law *must* be enforced, and where opposition is encountered the penalty of 'death or such less punishment' will be invoked. This 'Temporary Gentleman' is advised to cough loudly before addressing the multitude, and occasionally to ejaculate, 'Haw, haw!' This is *most* effective with the uneducated. When awkward questions are asked, these can be disposed of by the use of Wellington's formula: 'Silence, damn you! Don't you know who I am?' These suggestions must *not* be shown to any one employed by *The Daily News*, *Comic Cuts*, or *The Nation*.

As the railway-boys [Tam and Puddin'] are always over-anxious to shoot peas at the enemy's aeroplanes, it is advisable to double them up and lock them in the safe. The lady booking-clerks are to be accommodated on a settee, and supplied with smelling-salts, tear-towels, and a hand-mirror, to observe how beautiful woman is when approaching to death. The tears will be collected in army ordnance cartridges (Mark III. Woolwich pattern), and forwarded to Lachrymatory Gas Department, Lethal Chambers, Asafetida Street, Death Avenue, Manchester.

On the 'All Clear' being sounded, the

engine will give three toots, lights will be turned up, *commencing from the right*, and all doors unlocked. Station-masters are strongly urged to seize such an occasion for a collection for the Army Council and the singing of 'God Save the King.'

Given under our hand and seal this 1st day of October, nineteen hundred and eighteen, at our headquarters, Café Snaw Blaw, Ben Nevis.

(Signed)

GERALD DE PAWNSONBY NORMAN,
Chief Staff Officer;

AUGUSTUS HORATIO NEVERSHOOT, F.M.,
Commanding the Atmospheric Forces,
Haggis Command.

AFTER ORDER.

In the event of casualties amongst the Bolshevik passengers, their pieces will be picked up with the aid of disinfected cavalry lances, and placed in egg-boxes, covered with red flannel, surmounted with the arms of Trotsky and a quotation in Latin:

O thanketh Gawdskis
For scattered Trotskis.

No flowers, please—by request.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAGGIE'S REVERIE.

IT was a beautiful summer afternoon. The sun was high in the heavens, trees and flowers were budding and smiling, and the birds were warbling out sweet melodies of love. It was a day to slack, a day for smiling reveries. Things were quiet at Kirkbride; there was only Maggie in the office, and not a passenger in sight. She had just finished the last chapter of a sentimental novel; so, primed as she was with the spirit of romance, consciousness departed, and she lay back in one of those day-dreams when the eyes are vacant and the soul travels on through sweet-scented lanes to an enchanting fairyland. The past was switched on to her mental screen, and she saw herself a bonny wee lassie playing at 'Ring a Ring o' Roses' and 'Pop Goes the Weasel.' A time of wonder; a period of joy, with no cares about fashions, salary, or human rivalries! On she passed, from the first standard to the sixth, renewing all the pleasures and pains of 5 and 5 make 10, to the worries of fractions, and

the sewing of dolls' 'undies' and blouses. Fun was mixed with 'pandies' from 'the tawse,' while the glory of a prize 'for good conduct and regular attendance' brought back an impish smile. Yes, those were simple, joyful days; life was one big soiree of fun, jam-cookies, and tea; and all the world was beautiful, *till the Kaiser shouted, 'War!'*

Maggie's features now became tense, for she saw braw, braw lads marching away —*to die.* And then the everlasting cry of 'Men! Men! Men!' followed by the appeal to women to do their duty. She smiled again, for Maggie was doing her bit—in a small way, it was true; but she was just a lassie. Still, she had relieved a man, and that man was fighting for Scotland at the war. Her heart throbbed with a glowing patriotism. Maggie loved her country—ay, loved the sodger-laddies more, and in her day-dreams often sang:

'Will ye no' come back again,
Will ye no' come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be.
Will ye no' come back again?'

Sweet Maggie's song was the song of the nation, for where are the eyes that will not melt to tears when the thought of the brave and the braw come creeping

into the soul. No wonder this part of the reverie was sad, for she had all that sensitiveness so characteristic of her race.

But the heart of youth is so buoyant that she was quickly carried out of her gloom to her cheerful lot at the station, and her experiences in the world of Romance. Though young, she, like all the lassies, had dabbled in the business from childhood. Even babies fall in love; and why not? The capacity to love is the sign-post of a noble soul. And so Maggie reviewed her 'affairs.' How varied they were; yet how innocent and delightfully sweet! She saw again wee Willie Johnson, who was her lover when she was five. Willie had long, fair curls, goo-goo eyes, a wee fat tummy in such a bonny red jersey; and, of course, he had a big stick of sugarally in his black-stained hand. Willie advanced with those wee, bashful, side-steps characteristic of childhood. At last he reached Maggie, who looked like a pretty shepherdess in her bonny wee hat and gown.

'I 've got sugarally,' he declared in that proud way, *so* like a wee man.

'An' I 've got a bank,' declared Maggie.

'But I 've an engine that puff-puffs.'

'I 've a sleepin' doll. See!' said Maggie, putting out her nose.

'Ma daddy gies me a penny on Seterdays.'

'I get tuppence; an' ma daddy disna get sae much money as your daddy. Ma daddy is kinder than your daddy. Mummy says that *ma* daddy 's a gentleman!'

'An' mine 's a bilermaker,' proudly proclaimed Willie, believing that a boiler-maker was a sort of king. Who will blame Willie for such a noble thought? Then the imp that is in all young men prompted him to say, 'Mebbe ye hae a bank, a doll, and a big daddy, but *I've* got the sugarally.'

This *was* a master-stroke.

'I love you muchee much,' declared Maggie, altering her tactics. Strange, isn't it, how woman is so clever from the cradle to the grave?

'Mebbe ye dae; but it 's ma sugarally ye want to sook.'

'It 's no! *Keep* yer sugarally. Wee Jimmy M'Bride 'll gie me a share o' his. I 'm no gaun to play wi' you. Bye-bye;' and she turned haughtily away, but keeked round every few steps to see if he was coming after her, as she *expected* him to do.

Poor Willie, finding himself on the eve of being jilted, eventually toddled after her, his wee, fat legs seemingly in knots, and breathlessly shouted, 'Maggie, Maggie!'

'Whit is it?' she said, in a saucy way.

'Here's ma sugarally!' and he handed over the big, black stick out of his well-stained hand.

'It's awfu' nice, Willie. Come on up to the park an' we'll hae sooks at it.'

'Ay! Come on.'

Away they toddled to the green-sward, and there, under an old tree, sucked the sugarally till it was no more. They came home hand-in-hand, goo-gooing all the way, and alarmed their respective parents with the sugarally-stains round their mouths and all over the clean pinafores of the morning.

'Mammy,' said Maggie that evening.

'Whit?'

'I love wee Willie Johnson.'

'Hoo's that?'

'He gied me a sook o' his sugarally.'

'A' richt; sleep noo, lassie;' and Maggie turned over to dream of Willie, just as she was day-dreaming now. And the real cause of this vision of childhood was the news of the morning that the one-time wee Willie Johnson had 'mairret a stoot widow wumin wi' seven weans.'

Poor wee Willie Johnson!

And so the lovers of childhood came up on the screen one by one. The

ever-growing, and therefore ever-changing, Maggie had altered her ideals from day to day. First it was wee fat boys, with curls like Willie Johnson; then long, dreamy boys with poet's eyes; occasionally hefty, devil-may-care laddies who put tacks under the master's seat, and dropped dead cats down old maids' lums. But wee, fat, good, or bad, Maggie had loved them all, for each had *something* which attracted; if it wasn't the heart, then it was their caramels, or black strippit ba's. She smiled sweetly at these early memories, for they *were* sweet, and only the cynic will scorn such a happy reverie. Maggie's life had ever been in the sunshine, and, like the bees and the butterflies, she had always found honey in the flowers of summer and youth. Of course, Maggie didn't quite realise that much of this fine philosophy was due to a good father and a big-hearted mother. She had inherited love from both, and heard nothing but cheerful lullabies and generous benedictions, and this largely accounted for the bonny smile which wrecked the hearts and hopes of youth. As for sympathy, she possessed an abundance. In her youth she was a playmate of a dear invalid boy. His pale face and dark, haunting eyes came flashing before

her now. Wee Joe Green lived next door, and from babyhood had been helpless. No crawling or pretty toddling for Wee Joe. He was wrecked by a mortal disease. But, as many know, these little souls are often heroes, repressing anguish, banishing visible signs of suffering and helplessness. Of this stuff Wee Joe was made. Lying in a little cot before the window, he dreamed dreams of conquest like Columbus and Clive, and sent his little tin soldiers over seas and mountains to wrest trophies from the jungle and win battles on the great, wide plains. With a little mouth-harmonium he courted Maggie, rendering, with a delicacy that only invalids can give, those haunting melodies that are strewn throughout our Scottish ballads. When he played 'Duncan Gray' or 'My Love she's but a Lassie yet,' Maggie sat spell-bound, gazing at this musician as the cultured critic sits beneath the feet of Paderewski or Marie Hall. Perhaps it was this pale, lovely boy, with his black, haunting eyes, and uncanny touch with all musical instruments, who had stirred within her a craving for romance, and a spirit of tenderness for the weak and maimed. Too readily we pass the cripple by. We are too selfish or too busy. But do you

know the sensitive mind of a cripple child —how he can see the things that authors see, and tell the cruel, the wicked, or the mad? Wee Joe loved Maggie because she had never scoffed at his infirmities, and always shared her pennies and her toys. Not that Joe wanted charity; he was too kingly and too proud. But, like all cripples, he craved for protection and for love. The great heart that was within welled up at her approach, and, like the Greeks, he would out with his harp and improvise melodies which even haunted the elders around. Only two people understood him—his mother and Maggie. The rest bored him, for he had the sensitive temperament of the cultured aristocrat, although he was known as *Poor* Wee Joe. Alas! he was not long for this world; and Maggie, in her reverie, recalled the last long night when Joe, with a flush on his cheek and the fire of death in his eye, battled like a Trojan for his life. Fate deemed otherwise; he was doomed. These signs he read from the beating of his heart and the grave manner of the doctor.

'Mother,' he whispered.

'Yes, dear.'

'Send for Maggie.'

'Why, little one?'

'I'm no long for this world, an' I want to see her.'

The mother, bursting with grief, turned away to call the dear, wee lassie who had been the sunshine of his life. She stepped in softly and reached the bed. Wee Joe smiled. It was the smile of a beautiful angel. Then he put out his hand. She held it tenderly, his mother holding the other, and in the background stood the doctor spell-bound with the tragic, yet beautiful, scene. Wee Joe never spoke again, but, with that smile which is eternal, he passed slowly, nobly on to the God who loves sinners and Christians, and little cripples more.

Wee Joe! Kind, clever, Wee Joe!

In a reverie the story of Wee Joe is but a flash. There were hundreds of flashes—a few sad, but many joyful; none more joyful than the ways of the maister, or the antics of Puddin' and Tam. Little incidents were recalled. When pieced together these created a pleasant, pleasant picture of her present lot. They were all so happy; and wasn't the maister a kind, kind man? Puddin' was so funny, Tam so devil-may-care and loving, and Jimmy M'Cloon very, very nice, 'but too fond o' pittin' it on.' If Tam had divined that changing spirit, he might have been

tempted to chew the skip of his bunnet with joy. Still, she had not given Jimmy his walking-ticket or Tam the hope of eternity. Why should she? It was her privilege to dangle the strings, and for them to pull. All laddies were nice, and, at the moment, she had other dreams. Dreams of a tailor-made skirt and jacket, a saucy velour hat, a Drooko umbrella, patent-leather shoes, and a fine leather bag. She had been saving up for this great scheme. She now saw it complete, and witnessed her triumph on the Sunday promenade in Queen's Park. And then Tam came into her visions *again*. She tried to put him out, for she had so much to dream about, especially her holidays; but this boy Tam kept popping *in* and *in* at all times. She found Tam irresistible in her day-dreams, and commenced to weave all sorts of fancy stories round him. He was really nothing less than the manager with a top-hat, a motor, and a telephone. Puddin' was the super. o' the line; while the maister, in a velvet jacket, sat at a great oak table as head of the Board. The dividends had been doubled, salaries were now enormous, and all the old staff of Kirkbride lived in houses with main doors, electric bells, and a wee maid to cook the ham and wash

the steps when all the maidless mistresses went by. She and Tam were married, of course; and, mark you, he left the house at *nine* and was back at *four*, evidence of his being a 'high heid yin.' Their little house was a wonderful affair, including bathroom (h. and c.), gas-cooker, and *a lamp* in the hall. Of course, they had a Ford, and she saw herself and Tam scooting past Jimmy M'Cloon, who had married 'yin o' them frae Eglinton Street.' Poor Jimmy! He was pushing a wide pram with twins inside, while two others shouted, 'Paw—gie me a ride in the pram, paw.'

'Oh michty!' exclaimed Maggie, as the Ford (toot-tooted by Tam) went flying past.

Puddin' had not married. He found that a railway superintendent had no time to get married, for his daily task of smartening up railway-boys and ticket-lassies absorbed his energies. The maister was a most unusual Chairman. He stopped all the traffic twice a week to give drivers and firemen a ham-and-egg tea off the dividends of the Company. The maister explained this remarkable change of policy by saying that he liked the black squad, and 'didna want them to jine the Bolshevists.' It was now a wonderful railway. Velvet cushions in

the carriages, electric light, and a coloured panorama showing all the hotels, refreshment-bars, golf-links, and honeymoon-resorts in those frames which formerly displayed advertisements for Highland Dew and ladies' corsets. For a penny, slipped into the slot of the carriage-door, the passenger could secure anything from a copy of *Comic Cuts* to a small cup of 'Hotto,' a new refreshment invented by the Distillers' Society to defeat the Tee-Tee policy of Ca Canny in the swallowing of the national fire-water. By pressing a button the window went up or down, thus abolishing the temptation to steal window-straps for sharpening the nation's razors. In the ladies' compartment there was a telephone to the guard's van, to enable ladies *over thirty-five* to protest about elderly gentlemen coming into their carriage. A dinner, seats at a music-hall, a marriage license, or coupons for sausages could be ordered by wireless. And at all stations there were rows and rows of baby comforters for the use of season-ticket holders whose babies had just been photographed *or* vaccinated. But, more important, Tam and Puddin' travelled in a blue enamelled saloon, with silver fittings, cigar-cabinets, champagne-racks, and a big telescope fore and aft to see *round corners*

and catch plate-layers playing at 'banker,' or boy-porters smoking Woodbines in the gentlemen's department.

Puddin' invented the telescope.

Surely such a reverie revealed Maggie as a lassie with a keen sense of humour and a *wonderful* imagination. And wasn't she fairly thinking about Tam! Tam was always the main man, the big man, and the *married* man. Ay, Tam was *her* man. No wonder she was so absorbed in her reverie, and unable to hear a tap! tap! at the booking-office window.

Tap! tap! *again.*

No response.

Tap! tap! tap!

Still in her dream.

'Hi!' roared a big, red-faced man.

'Whit?' said Maggie, jumping out of her reverie.

'Third to the Central; an' don't go to sleep about it.'

'I wisna sleepin'.'

'You looked like it, anyway.'

'I wis day-dreamin'.'

'What about?'

'The cheek o' mairret men.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEFEAT OF JIMMY M'CLOON.

'TAM!'

'Whit?'

'The Kirkbride Chow-Chows are comin' the nicht to ask us to play a match.'

'Whit match?'

'The semi-final wi' the Cathcart Blaw-Blaws.'

'Are you gaun to play?'

'Depends on the terms,' was the professional response. 'But you ocht to be there, *shair*.'

'Oh!'

'Ay!'

'Whit wey?'

'Jimmy M'Cloon's centre-forward for the Blaw-Blaws.'

'I'll stiffen him!' shouted Tam.

. . . . . .

That night Wullie Harvee and Rabbie Johnson, the captain and the secretary of the Kirkbride Club, appeared in the booking-office.

'Whit's on?' asked Puddin', feigning indifference.

'We want you to play agin' the Blaw-Blaws.'

'Whit 's the terms?'

'Sixpence an' a ham tea at Currie's.'

'I'm on.'

'Me tae,' assented Tam, thinking of the ham tea and Jimmy M'Cloon.

'There 's yer jerseys, then,' the captain said, handing each a yellow-coloured jersey with a black skull and cross-bones.

'The goods,' muttered Tam.

'See an' be there in time. Guid-nicht.'

'Oh ay, we 'll be there a' richt,' remarked Puddin' as the visitors departed.

'There 's gaun to be skin and hair flyin' on Seturday,' muttered Tam. 'I 'm in the centre, and you 're inside richt. Mind an' pass the ba,' an' dinna be greedy wi' it.'

'I 'm *no* greedy wi' the ba'. I ken a' aboot coheesion.'

'Can you back-kick?' inquired Tam.

'Easy.'

'Richt ye are. We 'll knock lumps aff them.'

'Goals wud be better,' added the practical Puddin'.

'I 'll get *them* a' richt.'

'Mebbe.'

'There 's nae mebbe aboot it. I can score frae the centre.'

'We 'll see,' replied the provoking one.

'Ach, you!' and Tam carried on with the counting of the used tickets.

The coming match created a great interest in Weir's, the booking-offices, and in the trains. All the boys were loudly arguing the merits of their respective champions. The inclusion of Tam and Puddin' rather upset some of the High School boys who had been left out, but Conkie M'Beetle defended their inclusion, and his opinion eventually silenced opposition. Meantime Puddin' and Tam were in training. They left nothing to chance.

'Whit are ye trainin' on?' the wee chap inquired one day.

'Hot pies, leeminade, and chips.'

'Michty me!' exclaimed the great authority.

'Whit are ye michtyin' aboot?'

'That's no a trainin' diet. The hot pies'll choke ye, an' the leeminade'll break yer wind. It's weel seen you hivna studied the gem.'

'Can ye dae ony better?'

'Ay.'

'Whit?'

'Pease-brose for breakfast, beef-steak for denner, and fried fish for tea. The pease-brose keeps the kidneys richt, beef-steak for the muscles, and fried fish for the brain. That's whit the Celtic trains on.'

'Ay; an' whit aboot exercises?'

'Swedish in the mornin', and a run at

nicht in the buits ye 're playin' wi'. Efter that a wash-doon at the jawbox. But nae Woodbines—nae Woodbines. Spiles the wind.'

'Spiles yer granny!' interjected Maggie in a malicious way.

'Whit dae ye ken aboot fitba'?'

'I ken ye 're fitba' daft.'

'You lassies hivna the wind to play the gem. Ye can sook oranges better.'

'Ye 're richt, Puddin'. Ye 're richt!' assented Tam.

'Wait till Seterday. The Blaw-Blaws 'll blaw ye awa', persisted Maggie.

'They 'll no blaw us awa'.'

'Wull they no?'

'Na; but we 'll blaw the Blaw-Blaws to whaur they canna blaw.'

'Blaw-Blaw,' interjected Puddin'.

'Ye 're *a'* blaw,' concluded Maggie.

. . . . . .

The night before a funeral, a marriage, or a fitba' match is always a great event in dreamland, especially for those who go to bed on cheese. Tam retired with half-a-pound of cheddar below his diaphragm. His experiences were dreadful. From ten at night till six in the morning he was playing the Cathcart Blaw-Blaws. Foul play, penalty kicks, red noses, and broken legs were sprinkled through his dreams.

Hundreds of policemen were on the scene, cavalry were charging the crowds, and half the population were carried home on shutters. Then just towards the dawn the final scene showed the Cleansing Department of the Corporation picking and sweeping up the scattered remains of Jimmy M'Cloon.

'Burr-ing-ing!' went the alarm-clock.

'Goal!' shouted Tam.

'Whit are ye goalin' at? It's six o'clock, laddie. Come on,' said his mother.

'Hiv we no won?' he inquired dreamily.

'Na!'

'Oh, it's you, mother. I've been dreamin';' and out of the bed he jumped.

While he was dressing he was, as usual, thinking of Maggie. Somehow it was always Maggie. In this mood he sauntered out to his job, and found Puddin' standing on top of a barrow sniffing the morning air.

'Whit's up?'

No reply—the sniffing went on.

'Are ye up it?'

No reply—still sniffing.

'Here, cheese it.'

'Cheese whit?' roared Puddin', after releasing a terrific volume of air from his lungs.

'This nonsense.'

'It 's no nonsense.'

'Whit is it, then?'

'Deep breathin'. Whit dae you ken aboot trainin' for the gem?'

'You an' yer trainin'! Get on wi' yer wark.'

With a grunt Puddin' resumed his duties, very much shocked at the lack of professional instinct in one who was to be centre-forward.

After a slow morning—oh, so very slow!—the hour arrived for their departure.

'Play weel, noo, laddies, an' nae kickin',' said the maister.

'We 'll win,' declared Tam.

'Mebbe,' ejaculated Maggie.

'There 's nae mebbe aboot it.'

'Come on!' shouted Puddin'; 'it 's nae use arguin' wi' lassies aboot fitba'. They 've nae wind for the gem.'

'Awa' wi' ye, ye fat wee bailie.'

'Ta-ta, Maggie;' and Puddin' disappeared.

He and Tam made for the field, where a large crowd had gathered—policemen, ambulance-men, old men and young, with a large sprinkling of chocolate-coloured caps, as well as the skip bonnets, by which you know the apprentice engineers. The flappers were in hundreds, and bonny lassies, too.

'No a bad "gate,"' mused Puddin', like one used to judging Internationals.

'That'll mean a second helpin' o' ham an' eggs; mebbe an extra tanner.'

'Mebbe,' was the provoking reply.

'Come on, you railway chaps; hurry up!' shouted the captain of the Chow-Chows.

'Richt ye are,' answered Tam, going inside.

In a few minutes they were ready. Lining up, they marched out in all the glory of yellow jerseys adorned with the ominous skull and cross-bones. The cheers were deafening. Puddin', who was the last of the line, got a wonderful welcome. His odd figure, big head, interfering nose, healthy tummy, and bandy-legs somehow caught the fancy of the crowd.

'Go on, Goliath!'

'Cheero, Sandow!'

'Hello, Oxo!'

Puddin', with a *blasé* wave of his hand, acknowledged the salutations. He had studied 'the gem.'

Next the Blaw-Blaws! They were led by Jimmy M'Cloon; all were clad in pink jerseys, white shorts, and red stockings. When they marched on to the pitch one thousand followers from Cathcart created a deafening din, and a boy with a melodeon played 'The Cock o' the North.'

Puddin' sniffed.

The whistle blew, and off went the players. Jimmy M'Cloon with a neat side-kick passed the ball to his inside left, but Puddin' interrupted, stiffened his body, against which a light-weight got a terrific bump, and passed the ball to Tam. It was rather neat, and gave them the opportunity to press forward. Like a flash they were through the opposing forwards; tricking the backs, with a well-directed kick Tam scored the first goal. The cheering was deafening.

'No bad,' said Puddin', offering his hand.

The ball was centred, and off they went again; but this time the Blaw-Blaws were out for revenge. They simply hacked through the opposition, in the course of which Jimmy M'Cloon tripped Puddin' and flopped him like a penny in the mud.

'Foul!' roared Tam.

'Ay, foul!' yelled Puddin'.

'Foul! Foul! Foul!' roared the crowd.

'I'll fix him the next time,' whispered Tam. 'Leave him to me.'

'Richt; but mind the referee.'

'Ay, ay.'

The play commenced once more, and went right on, even past the interval, without another goal. The Blaw-Blaws

were getting angry, and Jimmy led them hard. He was careering down field at a terrific pace, and was just on the verge of scoring, when Tam sidled in very cleverly, and, without being observed, caught his uplifted heel gently—oh so gently!—but it was sufficient to upset the balance, and down he came with a crash.

'Foul!' roared Jimmy.

Strange to say, no one else noticed it; not even the referee.

'Foul!' persisted Jimmy.

'Get on with the game,' commanded the referee.

'No bad,' whispered Puddin'.

They were now near the end of the match. Excitement was intense. The Blaw-Blaws were at least determined on a draw, and, to give them their due, they played manfully. From a corner of the field Maggie was watching Jimmy M'Cloon and Tam. Somehow she felt they were deciding 'which was which.' And then her eyes opened. Jimmy, with a magnificent dash, burst the Chow-Chows' defences, and he and his comrades passed and repassed the ball right up to the very goal of the enemy.

'Shoot!'

'Shoot for goal!'

'In wi' it!'

'Go in, man!'

'Oh! . . . H——! Boo! . . . Boo! . . . Boo! . . . Ye missed it!'

Tam had charged, sent Jim flying, kicked out the ball, and saved the day. It was a magnificent counter-attack. Following it up, he reached a suitable point, and with a splendid shot won the last goal.

The cheers that went up almost lifted the slates off the neighbouring roofs. Tam was seized and carried round and round the pitch. Above the din of a thousand voices he heard two distinct appreciations.

'No bad,' from Puddin'.

'Weel done, ma ain Tam!'

This was the end of Jimmy M'Cloon

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—I have been instructed by Mrs I. M. Pertinent to represent her claim on your Company for the sum of £50 expended on medical advice and treatment for a small Yorkshire Terrier which contracted a chill while waiting for the London express. An early settlement will avoid trouble. Failing a mutual agreement, action will be taken in a Court of Law.—Yours truly,

SLINKEM AND SLINKEM,
Solicitors.

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—While travelling with the 3.20 P.M. the other day a spark from the engine alighted on my white fox fur, burning a little round hole. I therefore claim £10 as compensation.—Yours faithfully,

MILLY DOOEMIN.

Superintendent, Claims Department.

Dear Sir,—My client, Mr Rufus Shonkostein, Passover Villa, Wee Jerusalem, Glasgow, has instructed me to claim damages for the loss of two heads off the brass nails on his *papier-maché* trunk. This trunk is an heirloom from his Polish father; the loss is, therefore, regretted. As my client is willing to settle the matter for a new leather one by Reid & Todd, I hope there will be no undue discussion about the matter.

I also assume you will pay the costs involved—i.e. 6s. 8d. for this letter, 1½d. for stamp, and 2d. for notepaper. (No charge for posting.)

Awaiting a prompt reply,—I am, yours truly,

Hermann Ibolski,
Notary Public, Barrister-at-Law,
Legal Adviser to the Rabbis at the
Meat Market.

Dere Sur,—I wis in the fower fifteen frae Poalukshaws tae the Central, an' I lost ma bag. Gawd strooth! The weans mulk bottle wis in it, an' a hauf-pun o' Masseys Irish as weel as ma ticket for the blanket manauge. Maggie McGoogan wis

wi' me an' can prove it. O, an' I forgot there wis a hauf-mutchkin o' 'The best.' Ma man's batin' me fur lossin' the hauf-mutchkin. I'm no carin' aboot ma bag or the wean's bottle, but if ye send the price o' the hauf-mutchkin, I'll dance at yer waddin'.—Yoors trooly,

AGGIE CUHOON,
Mull Vennel (3 up).

DEAR SIR,—Last week I sent a cage o' cock canaries frae Shawlands tae Hamilton. They were a' prize yins, an' the big cock lifted a First at the Rouken Glen Whustlers Show. But when the cage got tae Hamilton there wis nae cocks—*they were a' hens*, an' the man that bocht them frae me says they canna whustle, an' can only cheep for their meat. That's queer, is it no? Hoo did the cocks turn into hens between Shawlands and Hamilton? An' this mornin' he writes an' says they're still hens, but *no canary hens*, jist yellow yites painted wi' pent. I ken fine they're a lot o' canary men in Hamilton. An' it strikes me that yin o' them chinged the cocks into hens, an' no canary hens at that. Seein' that I mak' ma leevin' oot o' canaries, *specially cock canaries*, I wid be obliged if you would look efter this and get me my cage o' cock canaries back,

specially the big cock that lifted the First at the Rouken Glen Whustlers Show.

I've drooned the yellow yites.—Yours, very much upset,

WULLIE M'GINTY,
Cock Canary Dealer,
Ham Close, Shawlands.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR ARTHUR NICKEM.

(1.)

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—I travelled in the ill-fated express which came to grief near Bleattock and went on fire. I have lost my cowhide trunk, inside of which was a presentation gold watch, also a golf-bag with three New Auchterlony mashies, a shell-case of a six-inch which I was taking home as a souvenir, and a deed-box with some family papers. This is a great loss, and I therefore claim compensation.

No reasonable sum refused.—Yours truly,
ARTHUR NICKEM.

(2.)

ARTHUR NICKEM, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—We have examined your claim, also the débris of the express. In the remains of a leather bag we have

discovered a watch—*a brass watch, value ten and six.* You may have this article on calling at this office.—Yours truly,

WALTER WATCHALL,
Superintendent.

(3.)

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—I *never* wear brass, and what about golf-clubs, shell-case, deed-box, &c. ?—Yours truly,

ARTHUR NICKEM.

(4.)

ARTHUR NICKEM, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—We have discovered the heads of several Braid putters and cleeks, but no Auchterlony mashies. Seeing that these heads have survived the fire, we can only conclude that you must have been mistaken about having three Auchterlony mashies on the train.—Yours truly,

WALTER WATCHALL,
Superintendent.

(5.)

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—I may have been mistaken about the Auchterlony mashies, but you do not mention shell-case or deed-box.—Yours truly,

ARTHUR NICKEM.

(6.)

ARTHUR NICKEM, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—With reference to the shell-case, we have discovered the case of a fifteen-inch shell, not of a six-inch. As you have distinctly mentioned a six-inch case, we conclude there was no six-inch shell-case on this train. In any case, it is an offence under D.O.R.A. to have such a thing in your possession.—Yours truly,

WALTER WATCHALL,
Superintendent.

(7.)

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—There *was* a six-inch shell-case on the train, but I imagine it has got melted in the fire. But do inform me per return about the family deed-box and papers.

This is most important, and *I am determined to have satisfaction.*—Yours truly,

ARTHUR NICKEM.

(8.)

ARTHUR NICKEM, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—We have now had an opportunity of examining thoroughly the whole of the débris. No deed-box has been discovered, but we have found a *band-*

box containing pawn-tickets, ladies' photographs, a beer-bottle, also a bundle of correspondence addressed to you. This correspondence is from the Claims Departments of *several* Railway Companies, showing that this is your *unlawful* means of livelihood. Under the circumstances we believe your present claim to be *fraudulent*, and have asked the Judicial authorities *to issue a warrant for your arrest.*—Yours truly,

WALTER WATCHALL,
Superintendent.

(9.)

SUPERINTENDENT, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT.

DEAR SIR,—Sorry we cannot do business. I hope to have better luck with the N.B.—Yours hopefully,

ARTHUR NICKEM,
Claims Specialist.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MAISTER'S JUBILEE.

IF Kirkbride had its peculiarities, it also possessed many good qualities. Meanness was unknown, and for a deserving cause the inhabitants stumped up generously. For four years the natives had fed, housed, and dressed hundreds of homeless Belgians. In every other good cause the fame of the suburb stood high. There was something breezy and hearty about the residents. In the drawing-rooms, the bowling-green, tennis and other clubs there was a pleasing absence of formalities, and a generous fare for guests of the hour. This fine public spirit was also in evidence at the station. The little crowd of merchants, lawyers, and chartered accountants were proud of their station—so proud that they collected a sum of money each year for the upkeep of the pretty shrubs and flowers which were a feature of Kirkbride. They were also proud of Maister M'Muckle. He was an institution revered by all, as will be shown. When the wintry blast brought asthma, the 'flu,' or other annoying ailments to the maister's door, there was a

succession of kindly messages, and message-boys with bovril, cakes, and 'the best toddy' to cheer the old station-master on his way. Indeed, the natives were glad of any opportunity to show their appreciation, for the maister in health was so dignified, so gentlemanly and proud, that to offer him a tip, somehow, made them feel like trying to tip a king or a rajah. However, there came one great occasion when they would not be denied. This was the fiftieth anniversary of the maister's joining the service. Despite his modest appeals for them 'no to fash their heids,' there were many conferences held in the 8.33 A.M. train to town. The bailie, Wullie M'Footle, and Professor Lanker, a distinguished Liberal from Thornhill, were the moving spirits in the business, as they were in many other good works in their native suburb. They kindled the enthusiasm of the crowd, and in ten minutes had over twenty-four pounds—not bad business for Scotsmen. Then the wrangle commenced as to the gift. Wullie M'Footle was all out for a roll-top desk; the bailie suggested silver plate; and the professor, of course, desired a wise selection of books, especially John Stuart Mill and Gladstone.

'Twa pun' o' beef wud be better than yer books,' ejaculated Wullie, who was

known for eccentricities and 'nane-o'-yer-damn-nonsense philosophy.' However, the bailie and the professor managed to get Wullie to agree to a marble clock, with a silver plate stating the appreciation of the residents. On arriving at the Central they sallied forth to secure the gift.

. . . . . .

'Noo, boys, if ye keep yer noses clean, you'll a' get to ma perty on Friday nicht,' said the maister.

'Is that the jubilee affair?' inquired Snooker.

'Ay, Tam.'

'Is it a knife-an'-fork tea?' asked Puddin'.

'Oh ay, spunes an' a'.'

'Dessert, eh?'

'Dumplin's an' oranges.'

'An' conversation lozenges?' queried Maggie.

'I clean forgot them, Maggie; but I'll tell the wife ye wud like them. Lovey-dovey inscriptions, I suppose?'

'Uh-ha.'

'Ony sangs, maister?' piped Puddin'.

'Tam's singin'.'

'Oh jings!'

'Mebbe Maggie'll gie us a sang tae?'

'I'll try, Maister M'Muckle,' Maggie said, anxious to do something at the great jubilee.

And so the preliminaries were arranged. All that week the good-wife at the station-house was busy. She was baking scones, oat-cakes, parkins, Scotch bun, bridies, and jam-cookies, the last-named being specially made for the boys. Maister M'Muckle's white shirt was also attended to. For three days it lay bleaching on the green, and then Mrs M'Muckle had it in for starching and ironing. She was real Scotch and thorough. Her man was going to look nice on the night of the jubilee, especially before the gentlemen who were bringing the marble 'knock.'

But Mrs M'Muckle was not alone in the preparations; Maggie and the boys had a long committee meeting on the subject. The engrossing topic was a present for the maister. They had gathered ten shillings among them—not a bad sum for such juniors. But 'the present' caused a great bother.

'Whit aboot a ham?' said Tam.

'A ham!' exclaimed Maggie. 'Ye wud only get the smell o' a ham for ten shullin's.'

'A box o' finnan haddies, then,' shouted Puddin'.

'Ach, you!' answered Maggie.

'Whit are ye achin' aboot?'

'Ye never gie a man a ham or finnan

haddies at a jubilee. It's weel seen ye come frae Pollokshaws.'

'I ken,' interjected Tam.

'Whit?' grunted Puddin'.

'A box o' chocolates.'

'Chocolates! The maister disna eat them.'

'But *we* can eat them at the perty. That's what ye ca' deevidend.'

'This is no the Co-operative. Ye canna eat the profits o' a jubilee.'

'It'll need to be somethin' mair tangible,' Maggie suggested.

'Tangible!' mumbled Tam, scratching his head. 'D' ye mean tangerines?'

'Tangerines! Na! Tangible — somethin' ye can keep the haud o'.'

'A walkin'-stick, eh?'

'That's mair like the thing.'

'A meerschaum pipe wud be better—a yellow yin wi' a silver mount,' commented Puddin'.

'He disna smoke a meerschaum,' Maggie said.

'Ach, you! You'll no' hae a ham, finnan haddies, chocolates, or a meerschaum. You lassies are a' the same. You shouldna be on the committee at a'. Weemin canna mak' up their minds. That's the wey they're weemin.'

'I'm no a wumin,' shouted Maggie.

'Na! You 're only hauf o' a wumin.'

'Come on! Nae row! Settle up this present business,' cried Tam.

'A writin'-case, then,' said Maggie, with a growl in her voice.

'A meerschaum,' demanded Puddin'.

'The maister's gettin' auld, so I say a walkin'-stick,' was Tam's decision.

'Draw for it,' exclaimed Maggie.

'Richt ye are.'

The three gifts were written on slips of paper. Maggie was then blindfolded and told to draw. When the paper was opened it was 'a writing-case.' Maggie grinned broadly. Having settled the gift, all three decided to be on the purchasing committee. Puddin' really wanted to watch Tam to see that he didn't have any 'skin' off the transaction; while Tam was determined that Puddin' wouldn't buy at the Pollokshaws Co-op. and pass the dividend on to his 'maw.' Maggie's aim was to have the purchasing of the gift, lest the two blockheads would change their minds and buy a ham, finnan haddies, or black puddings.

They had a terrible row in Argyle Street as to the shop which was to have the honour of the purchase, but Maggie crushed all opposition by taking the ten-shilling note out of Tam's hand and walking into the Polytechnic. They sheepishly followed,

but were quite pleased to see Maggie get a bargain. And now for the jubilee.

. . . . . .

The station-house was ablaze with light. In the well-dusted parlour was a table groaning with viands fit to soothe Rab Haw. Mrs M'Muckle had on her nice black dress faced with a white lace collar and cuffs. She looked charming—so charming that the maister kept peeping in the glass to see if he was a worthy partner of such a bonny and distinguished old lady. He *did* look well. The light enhanced the silver strands on his fine, shapely head; the blue eyes shone with merriment and a kind philosophy; while the black suit and white shirt lent to his form an atmosphere of the past. A bonny couple, illustrating to the full that Scotland is the land of love and the mother of good citizens, and repelling that old libel that the Scots are mean. It may be a great honour to dine with kings, but it is a greater honour to have the friendship of such sterling folk. Burns never wrote a truer verse than when he said:

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'

The bell rang.

'That 'll be the boys,' said Mrs M'Muckle, hurrying to the door. On opening it, there she saw Tam, Puddin', and Maggie, with well-scrubbed faces and the smile that won't come off. Tam had the writing-case hidden under his coat.

'Come awa' ben, Maggie and you laddies. Ay! jist hang up yer coats. That's it—in here, noo;' and they were ushered into the lighted parlour.

'Man! man! ye're a' lookin' braw the nicht,' said the maister. 'Have ye had yer tea, Tam?'

'Na; I never tak' ma tea when I'm gaun to a perty.'

'Watch his pooches, Mrs M'Muckle,' remarked Puddin'. 'He's fond o' liftin' cookies.'

'Pooch awa'. It's oor jubilee, laddies. Sit doon!'

The bell rang again, and then entered the maister's son, who was a big man on a 'Glesca' paper. He was followed by Maister M'Harrie, the super. o' the line, and a host of boon companions who had come to honour their old friends.

'Come awa', noo; sit in. The supper's gettin' cauld,' commanded the good-wife.

They pulled in their chairs. Like all good Scots, they looked to the head of

the table, then bowed their heads as the maister said in a low, reverent tone, 'O God, the giver of good things, friend in joy and adversity, we thank Thee to-night for all Thy mercies, and for the food which is spread before us. Let us eat and drink to Thy glory, for Christ's sake, Amen.'

'Wha says pie?' he inquired when the grace was done.

'Me!' 'Me!' 'Me!' cried Tam, Puddin', and Maggie.

'We'll a' hae pie, then;' and the maister sank his knife into a glorious crust which was the secret pride of the goodwife.

Plates of the steaming and well-flavoured dish were handed round, thus opening the jubilee in good old-fashioned style. There was 'a wee nip' for the men-folks, ginger-wine for the ladies, while the juniors had the option of ginger-wine, iron brew, or kola.

'Kola;' 'Kola;' 'Kola,' was the demand of the juveniles. They had been trained to this beverage in the ice-cream shops of Antonio Frisco. The kola and the pie summed up their view of human happiness. During the first round Tam and Puddin' were seen whispering, and Maggie afterwards alleged they were advising

each other to hurry up 'an' catch a second helpin'.'

After the pie came a wonderful roast turkey, with roast potatoes, stuffing, and green peas. When Tam saw the savoury bird he immediately undid the top button of his lower garments. This, of course, is a habit handed on from the Zulus and the Maoris, especially the Maoris, whose favourite dish was a roasted sailor or a six-foot sergeant of the Guards.

'D' ye like turkey, Tam?' inquired the maister.

'Ay; I'll hae the breist. Gie Puddin' the legs.'

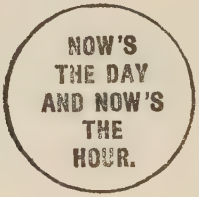
Tam got a slice of the breast for his impudence.

Next came the Scotch trifle (two helpings for the boys), and then the nuts, oranges, and almonds. Tam was seen filling his pockets at this course, much to the amusement of Mrs M'Muckle, who encouraged him with a nod. And then Maggie's conversation lozenges arrived. Her eyes sparkled when she saw them come in. Tam picked up one and passed it to her. It read:

WILL YOU BE
MA AIN KIND
DEARIE OH?

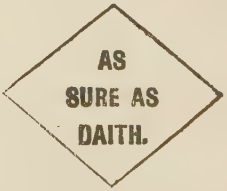
Maggie replied:

Tam promptly answered:



Maggie satisfied his hopes with:

And Tam's final lozenge read:



This closed the pleasant game devised by some wit in the long ago to aid the

less bashful to catch the bashful. Many a man has got a wife by the aid of conversation lozenges.

Meantime the table had been cleared, the glasses were clinking merrily, cigars and cigarettes were filling the room with a pleasant aroma of Havana and Virginia, and on the faces of all was that genial glow which comes from good food, good wine, and good company. Anecdotes were being swopped, and many a tale of the Company was going the round. At cracking jokes the maister held his own. In the midst of a diverting tale the bell rang.

'That's the gentlemen,' said Mrs M'Muckle, hastening out to the door.

'Good-evening, Mrs M'Muckle,' said the bailie, stepping in. Following him were Wullie M'Footle and Professor Lanker. Wullie had the marble clock under his arm.

'Come awa' ben, gentlemen,' said the good-wife.

They gladly did so, and in a few minutes were seated at the festive board. They were just in time, for Tam was singing:

'They say it's the sodgers wha're winnin' the war.
Weel, mebbe it is; but I think that's a blaw,
For sodgers an' guns canna get very faur
Withoot engines an' trains an' porters an' a'.

It 's the maister an' me an' oor whustle an' flag
Wha sent off the men to flatten the Hun ;
So there 's *mair* than the sodgers entitled to brag
Aboot *winnin'* the war an' *manglin'* the Hun.'

Chorus—
'We whustled them off,
We whustled them hame ;
We never said ocht
When they got the fame ;
But the maister an' me
'Ll get nae O.B.E.
For whustlin' the whustle
An' flaggin' the flag ;
An' I thocht that the thing ca'd Oh-Bee-Ee-e
Was invented to honour the maister an' me.'

This song 'brought down the house,' and raised still higher the prestige of Tam.

When the applause subsided Professor Lanker rose and said : 'Maister M'Muckle, ladies and gentlemen, my part to-night is indeed a pleasant one. It is my lot to say something about our respected station-master, who has served the Company with honour, and rendered to the travelling public a courtesy and a loyalty unrivalled throughout our railway system. The maister is one of our idols, and he has achieved that position, not through his learning—and his learning is high—but through his wisdom, his kindly philosophy, and benevolent attitude to his fellow-men.

We have never heard him utter a bitter word, or tinge the things that matter with that cynicism which is unfortunately getting a hold of this too material world. Before coming here to-night I was troubled indeed to find something fitting wherewith to appraise the character of our dear friend; but fortunately there flashed to my aid those haunting lines of Wotton's:

'How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

'This man is freed from servile bands,
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

'Beautiful words, and an apt illustration of all those noble qualities which have endeared the maister to us. In passing, it is well to note that somehow or other the railways, like the banks, have a genius for the discovery of character. Travel where you will, you find the station-masters, drivers, porters, even the boys, have that something in their make-up which is arresting. The open face, the strong chin, smiling eyes, and the ever-cheerful salutation are characteristic

of all. Their loyalty to the Company, their dogged pursuit of success, and their clinging to all those virtues which have made us have become proverbial; so much so that the globe-trotter finds our railwaymen holding high and responsible posts in Canada, America, India, the Argentine—indeed, every sphere where an engine can puff its way. But in this age we are too busy, and frequently forget the debt we owe to the railways, and such a railwayman as our honoured friend.

'Prior to the advent of the engine, the nation, indeed all nations, were poor. Transit was difficult and expensive. Culture was beyond the dreams of the average youth, and so were the pleasures of travel, and therefore many of the pleasures of hope. We lived a parochial, a narrow, life. The outer world was almost a mystery, and only a few could visit sunnier climes, or follow the gleam in the temples of the Greeks and the Romans. We were all poor—miserably poor. Commerce was restricted, initiative was damned, and success as we understand it to-day was then but a vision. Then came the navvy, behind him the plate-layer, followed by the engine, the train, the goods-wagons, and a staff of men whose energies have not only yielded us wealth, but added to our fame. Alas!

we have accepted the fruits without grace, and too many shuffle in and out of the railway stations without one appreciative thought of a magnificent system. It takes a war—or a strike—to rouse us from our lethargy. I boldly say: without our splendid railways, our loyal railwaymen, and such zealous station-masters as Maister M'Muckle, we could not have defeated the Germans. Every man on the railways of Britain should have a medal for his services in this war.

'But I must get back to our good friend. What really endears him to us is his character. And character is the secret of true success. The ability to say "No" is a fine thing—much finer than the easy utterance of "Yes." And we find evidence of this character in many ways—his love of flowers, his passion for justice and order, his courtesy to the aged and the weak, his chivalry to the fair, and, more important, a love of his own fireside. Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, the test of love is at the hearthstone. Here it is in being. Never in all my life have I seen such a God-fearing, homely, and devoted couple as our host and his good lady. The maister, unlike many foolish mortals, has found the bluebird of happiness in his own embers, rather than in the fires of a

less sincere world. But time is pressing, and my most important part is the handing over of this presentation, not only as a memento of good service, but also as a tangible token of our warm and abiding love. And I would, on behalf of my friends and the good people of this suburb, ask our friend and his good lady to appreciate the giving more than the gift, for the spirit is greater than the body, the soul of giving higher than all gifts. This small token is really our tribute to our friend's beautiful philosophy —a philosophy immortalised by Wordsworth when he said:

'My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die.
The child is father of the man,
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.'

When the orator sat down there was a strange, almost breathless silence. The spell of something higher had gripped the hearts of all. They had travelled from worldly things to beautiful dreams, and were too enraptured to utter vulgar applause. And so it was with difficulty the

maister rose. His fine old features showed his agitation, while his eyes betrayed the fact that, like all good men, he had been touched with the spirit of love and enthused by the atmosphere of faith.

'Professor Lanker, . . . ladies, . . . and gentlemen,' he uttered in a halting way, and then there was a long pause, for he was gripping his nerves. But, looking up once more, he gave one of his sweet smiles, and remarked, 'I was nearly bate; but I *maun* reply, I *maun* reply,' emphasising his words in a deliberate way. 'All I have done wis ma duty. I never thocht that duty brings friends; but, man, I'm real pleased to think that one who tries to walk in the way o' the Lord and does his best for the Company can receive the friendship o' mankind. In this strange time that's awfu' comfortin'. But, man, man, it's hard to ken what to say. I'm jist overwhelmed wi' love an' kindness. The professor's speech minds me o' the days when I used to hing to a lamp-post or a door to hear Wullie Gladstone at his best. It's no the clock I'm gaun to thank ye for—I've lots o' them—it's the kind wey ye gie it, the Christian spirit behind it a'.' Then, looking round, he exclaimed with a wave of his hand to his better-half, 'I'm awfu' glad ye mentioned the wife.

I 'm tellin' ye, she 's a guid yin, faithful in a' ma tantrums, an' awfu' guid at the rubbin' when I 've got the lumbago. Ay,' he continued, in a more solemn tone, 'a wife can mak' or brak a man. If I got a lot frae ma ain mither, I hae a lot frae the wife. Wine an' weemin are guid for man, if ye ken the wey o' them, and dinna abuse them. There 's naethin' but love in this hoose. I got that philosophy oot o' the Bible and the "Cottar's Saturday Night." But I 'm forgettin'; I maun *thank* ye, *thank* ye, kindly. My life here has been one o' pleesure; an' when the day comes to retire, I 'll tak' the wife, the clock, an' your kind memories to a wee hoose on the hills, an' there, amongst the flooers an' in the sunshine o' God, dream awa' the days, an' think o' the *happy, happy* hoors I 've spent at the bonny wee station o' Kirkbride. That 's a', . . . that 's a', . . . kind . . . kind freens . . . God bless ye;' and the old man sank back in his chair with the tears of love welling into his eyes.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVE'S GOLDEN DREAMS.

YOU will have observed ere this that Tam improved daily. The railway had smartened him, Maggie had sweetened him, and tips enriched him. He had acquired the art of knowing when to wear a bowler and how to cock a bonnet. And from the wee maids of Kirkbride had come that knowledge of 'the old, old tale.' Tam, though still a boy in years, was a man in experience, with a man's hope, a man's vision, and a man's love. His love, of course, was in the early stage, generally distinguished by such signs as refusing dinner, writing awful poetry, and penning epistles as long as the Bible. He, of course, loved all lassies, but with a special regard for Maggie. Maggie annoyed him, teased him, enraged him; but Maggie was his choice. He couldn't help it. She had dragged him from simple pleasures into the swirling maelstrom of love. It was a strange experience, but somehow it settled him, and when he mused on Maggie he also dwelt on how to get on and secure a soft job with a big pay. In this he was

a true Scot. Tam, like his countrymen, believed that hard work was only meant for fools and horses. He always envied 'the heid yins,' and his aim was to be 'a heid yin,' for then he could have a front-door, an electric bell, a gas-cooker, and—Maggie. This was only natural. It is a complaint as old as the hills. And the disease afflicted Maggie as it did Tam. But, like all her sex, she was more practical, and, unknown to Tam, was taking lessons in cooking. From a teacher she was to secure those arts which ensure a good dinner off half a haddie, and a wonderful breakfast from two bits of toast and a bantam's egg. Her mother was teaching her patching; and patching, she knew, would be her task, for Tam somehow wore out the seat of his breeks at an alarming rate. She also dreamed dreams, but, like a clever girl, she never mentioned these to Tam. In these fairy worlds Tam was a station-master, living in an ivy-covered cottage, with a nice garden and lots of cabbages, not forgetting the hens which laid *three times* a day. Although Tam had never mentioned such a thing as marriage, Maggie had commenced 'a bottom drawer.' She had started with a pincushion, next a tea-cosy from a jumble sale, and on and on, from an antimacassar to a *red* flannel

nightie—for Tam. You will thus see that Maggie took all for granted. Tam being but a creature of her will, she knew that when he was qualified, all she had to do was to lower her eyes, heave a sigh, lean against him in the approved style of Garvice, and thus inspire the bewildered youth to hold her hand and say, 'Maggie, will you be mine?' And Tam *required* a practical, masterful lassie like that. He was a harum-scarum loon who, in good hands, would become a decent elder o' the kirk and 'a heid yin' on the railway. During all these preliminary antics he was saving up his siller and praying hard for promotion. His prayers were answered, for he received the news that he was to be the head boy at another station, salary twenty-eight shillings a week. Not bad for a mere youth. He whispered the news to Maggie, and also suggested a ham tea at Rouken Glen that night. She nodded assent, much to his joy, for he had a nice ring in his vest-pocket.

There were great preparations on both sides that evening. Tam scrubbed his face with Vinolia till it was red, and took the scrubber to his hands. From under the mattress he drew his creased trousers, and off a stretcher lifted his jacket. The suit, capped with his Homburg hat, and orna-

mented with the afore-mentioned sixpenny cane, silver mount and all, created a youthful Beau Brummell, fit subject to do the heavy in Rouken Glen, and plead for the heart and hand of his own. Maggie did her hair up in the Grecian style, put on an alluring open-work blouse, a tidy pleated skirt, fresh-air stockings, nice nutty shoes (bow and all), covered her hands with good white gloves, lifted a new umbrella, and sailed forth to meet Tam at the Queen's Park Gate. *En route* she met Jimmy M'Cloon.

'Hello, Maggie!' he shouted.

'I'm no speakin' to you.'

'Oh!'

'Ay.'

'Whit for?'

'Jist!' She hurried past, and, strange to say, she was only fifteen minutes late. Not bad for a start, seeing that the usual thing is *half-an-hour*.

'Good-evening, Maggie,' said Tam, raising his Homburg in the way he was taught at Pollokshields. This gave the young lady great delight. All smiling, they boarded the tram and splashed fourpence on the ride to the historic and sentimental Rouken Glen. No expense was spared on arriving. A ham tea (two eggs each), cookies and 'terts,' as well as

a big bag of caramels to chew for dessert. Tam had purchased his experience, and on this occasion he meant to shine. After the meal they sallied forth to a rustic seat beneath a fine old tree. On the way Maggie swung her umbrella and Tam twirled his stick. They caused quite a sensation, and were secretly pleased to hear a sooty-nosed gamin say, 'Aw jings! Look at the wee toffs!' Tam somehow felt he was 'a heid yin' at last. Success, social and professional, had arrived.

Taking their seats, he handed over a pound of 'M'Coll's,' and then proceeded to light a Gold Flake in the finished style of a Spanish señor. He sparked the match on his boot, and this somehow impressed Maggie. She had seen the bigwigs do that at the station. And so they settled down, one biting chocolates, the other puffing the smoke of Virginia into the peaceful air. It was a new world. Maggie, of course, knew something was coming. After a ham tea, a girl expects anything from a ring to a wedding. But, like a clever girl, 'she never let on;' and lassies are very clever at this game. Men don't know this till they get married, but after all it would be cruel to shed the illusions of youth and reduce love to the game of a limited company. We love to

plunge into the unknown. Yet on this occasion Tam's volubility deserted him. He was shifting about and rubbing his feet in an awkward manner. Maggie decided to start him off by remarking, 'I hope you'll like the new job, Tam.'

'Oh ay.'

'It's promotion?'

'Ay!'

'You're gettin' on.'

'No bad.'

'Mair money, I suppose?'

'Twinty-eicht.'

'That's awfu' guid.'

'I'm savin' up.'

'Whit for?'

'Oh, . . . jist savin' up.'

'That's fine. You've got ambeetion.'

'Ye hiv to keep pushin'. I want a job wi' ma jaicket on. The less ye dae, the mair money ye get. I ken a chap that mak's his livin' lyin' in bed.'

'Whit dis he dae?'

'Writes jokes for the *People's Journal*.'

'Whit's your ambeetion, Tam?'

'I'm no shair.'

'Ticket-collector, eh?'

'It's no a bad job. Ye can get a lot o' "skin" aff the excess fares; but it's risky. An' ye're aye hingin' aboot the gate. Na; that'll no fit me.'

'Flyin' squad, then?'

'That's a' richt for a single man.'

'But you're single, are ye no?' Maggie exclaimed, hiding a laugh.

'Eh? . . . Ay. . . . But I wisna talkin' aboot masel'.'

'Wud ye like to be a superintendent?'

'Fine; but ye need inflooence for that. Ye need a director to gie ye a kick in the back. I'm no guid at sookin' in wi' the toffs. I hae opeenions, an' want to get on wi' ma ain work. I'm copyin' the maister.'

'He's a fine man to follow.'

'Oh ay; but he says the wife helped him. I've nae wife to help me. No that I want to get tied up the noo, but it's nice to hae a lass.'

'But you've lots o' lassies, Tam,' mumbled Maggie, with her eyes on the ground. She knew the critical moment was arriving.

'They're platonics. I've only wan that suits me.'

'Oh!'

'Ay!'

'Wha's she?'

'Yersel',' he exclaimed, looking boldly into her eyes.

'Awa' wi' ye,' she said, with a playful nudge against him.

Tam felt that this was the psychological moment to embrace her. He took her in his arms and kissed her once, twice, thrice.

'Stop it! Stop it!'

This, of course, is the recognised protest, as the ladies know. Tam knew that, and resumed operations, till the appearance of a park-ranger subdued the expression of his love, and he returned to the part which all men adopt when the world is looking on. But, Tam having got his declarations over, discussion became more natural, and the twin-souls frankly talked of their schemes. Maggie was glad to do so, for she hated the rôle of prompter and actress, and liked Tam for his ainsel'. It was his native goodness, his generous instincts, and happy, humorous outlook which enthralled her. Life with Tam would be pleasure; without him it would be pain. Although she was but a mere lassie, she was a shrewd judge of character, and her soul—like all feminine souls—was built up on the hopes of a settlin' doon, making the dinner, and coddling the bairns. You may say Maggie was too young for such thoughts. Not at all! It is an instinct present in all. Watch a girl of six, ten, or twelve handling a doll. Motherhood! Motherhood! It's there! You cannot eradicate it, and it would be

a calamity to attempt it. If we had more early marriages there would be less disease and less adultery. No man has lived until he is a father and the president of a household. A mercenary and pleasure-seeking civilisation has mangled this ideal, as we know to our cost. But read again the poets and note the beauty and nobility of youthful love. It is far cleaner, far truer, than the game of Maida Vale or the gilt-edged tragedies of Mayfair. Tam was not conscious of the possession of such a fine philosophy. Nevertheless, he was an exponent of it simply because he was as God had made him. Youth in the natural state is always joyful, manly, and pure. And it is only when the plunge is taken into the bleeding, soul-racking bestialities that the mantle of true manhood falls, and the mask of the hypocrite and the roué goes on. Providence, however, was on his side. The maister had given him the grand secret; Maggie was supplied as a sort of sheet-anchor in this stormy and passionate world. And if he *was* filled with the desire to get on, that was laudable, for he had had enough of poverty. In his own crude way he was hunting with Peter Pan, romping with Cupid, and pining for the bluebird to chirp at his own fireside.

To the supercilious, who have the brains of a donkey, Tam will only appear as a crude bletherskite; but to the men and women who understand, he will stand as the embodiment of that delightful faith which makes great nations and is the author of great men. Love, like the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world.

'I hope you'll get on weel at yer new job, Tam,' Maggie said towards the close of the evening.

'I'll dae ma best.'

'That's fine.'

'An' you'll be true, Maggie?'

'Awfu' true,' Maggie said, with sincerity.

'I'm gled o' that. I'll save up, and when we're a bit aulder we'll get mairret an' settle doon.'

'Ay, Tam.'

'There's a ring to ye, then. Keep it an' mind me a' the time.' He slipped a bonny wee gold ring on her finger.

'Oh, that's awfu' braw, Tam! There's a kiss,' she said.

'An' there's anither.'

'D' ye ken, Tam?'

'Whit?'

'I think ye should try an' be a station-maister.'

'That's jist whit I've been thinkin'

aboot. I want a nice, wee hoose on the line, an' at the end o' fifty years to get a marble knock for oor jubilee—jist like Maister M'Muckle.'

'That's it, Tam—jist like Maister M'Muckle.'

Bless them!

THE END.

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